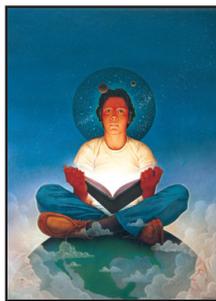


REAL WOMEN HAVE CURVES & OTHER PLAYS

BY JOSEFINA LOPEZ



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INTRODUCTION

A WOMAN OF HER WORD(S): JOSEFINA LÓPEZ

Josefina López was born in Mexico in 1969. At the tender age of five she was brought to this country illegally settling with her family in Boyle Heights, East of Los Angeles. She started grammar school the following year and thus began the process of “Chicani-zation” in the school system and in this society. From her first day in school, López knew that although her parents had green cards, she was undocumented and therefore lived in constant fear of being deported. But she used her vivid imagination to get her through, living a kind of shadow existence for several years until she became a Temporary Resident through the Amnesty Program in 1987. The threat of deportation would inform several of her plays, becoming a kind of leitmotif in the lives of her characters. According to López, she “became a Chicana” at the age of twenty, ostensibly when she no longer feared deportation.

López first started writing plays in the fifth grade. However, her major influences were the televised version of the Teatro Campesino’s *La gran carpa de los Rasquachis*, retitled “*El corrido*,” and the live production of Luis Valdez’s *I Don’t Have to Show You No Stinking Badges*. She had seen “*El corrido*” when she was in the 9th grade. “*El corrido*” was taped in part as a stage performance and López could see the possibilities in the live, staged version. Watching the program, the impressionable and imaginative author felt liberated from the constrictions of realism:



I thought, wow, I didn't know that theatre could be this way. . .that's how I think. . .that's what I loved about it, that one moment you're in Mexico and the next [you're in the US]. . . .transitions and transformation--that's how I think; that it could be an epic, adventuresome. . .it doesn't have to stay in one place.

While attending the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts López saw *I Don't Have to Show You No Stinking Badges*, written and directed by Luis Valdez at the Los Angeles Theater Center in 1986. Yet, while Valdez's play was an inspiration to the young playwright, it also inspired her emerging feminism. As she searched Luis Valdez's works for a monologue to perform, López discovered that Valdez's female characters "were very flat--all mothers and girlfriends." It is important to remember that López was studying acting in high school with the intention of becoming an actress. Like many female actors who become playwrights, López decided to create her own vehicles to perform. If the male-dominated, sexist Chicano Theater Movement was not going to satisfy López's desire to act, she would take matters into her own hands. This volume is a testament to her commitment to create theatre that is relevant for all audiences, especially women.

ROMAN CATHOLIC NIGHTMARES: SIMPLY MARIA, OR THE AMERICAN DREAM

López participated in the Los Angeles Theater Center's Young Playwrights Lab from 1985 to 1988, gaining valuable experience, writing and watching all of the plays she could. Her playwriting career was initiated when *Simply Maria, or the American Dream* was produced as part of the California Young Playwright's Project in San Diego, California, in 1988. This play clearly demonstrates influences of the highly theatrical early Valdezian, Teatro Campesino style in which time and place are irrelevant as the characters traverse international borders by simply crossing the stage. In López's vision the actors transform into any number of characters and allegories in this coming-of-age play centered on the young (autobiographical) Maria. López dramatizes Maria's parent's courtship and elopement in Mexico, her birth, their crossing to the U.S. and her dreams of becoming a writer in a comically exaggerated critique of Machismo, the



Church and Mexican patriarchy.

Simply Maria is not a “simple” play and should not be dismissed as such. As she will continue to do in her later plays, López is deconstructing traditional expectations, laying the blame for attitudes of what a “good Mexican girl should be” squarely on the patriarchal teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. She creatively and caustically indicts the Institution through her hilarious, yet poignant portrayal of the Church and its priests. After the Priest officiates at Maria’s parents’ marriage, three women, who have been portraying statues of the saints in the church (allegories), come to life and transform into “three angelic girls” who chant a litany of what a Mexican girl can and cannot do. They recite that a Mexican girl must be: “Nice, forgiving, considerate, obedient, gentle, hard-working, gracious.” She must like: “Dolls, kitchens, houses, caring for children, cooking, laundry and dishes.” She must not: “Be independent, enjoy sex, but must endure it as your duty to your husband, and bear his children.” Her goal must be to reproduce and her only purpose in life is to serve three men: “Your father, your husband and your son.” By having the Three Marys transform into angelic girls, the playwright locates these ideas firmly in the name of the Church.

Later in the play Maria dreams about her own “White Wedding.” This time the priest lists the duties of a good Mexican wife. He asks if she will: “...love, cherish, serve, cook for, clean for, sacrifice for, have his children, keep his house, love him even if he beats you, commits adultery, gets drunk, rapes you lawfully, denies you your identity, money, love his family, serve his family and in return ask for nothing?” After Maria agrees to the (exaggerated) marriage vows the priest puts a collar and leash on her and tells the groom “You may pet the bride.” This caricature of the priest and parody of a Catholic wedding ceremony becomes an indictment of the Church itself, for the author makes it clear that the priest does not speak in isolation. López does not release the Church from its complicity; she refuses to show any transformations in Church doctrine or in the priest’s traditional interpretation of marriage. In the end, Maria is triumphant, liberating herself from her father’s and the Church’s literal and symbolic clenches. Like the Teatro Campesino’s early actos, Simply Maria is a modern morality play. However, in this play the teachings of the Church are subverted rather than promoted and the playwright incites her female



audiences to challenge the patriarchy.

This simple, yet complex play, directed by a Mexican actor and director, Luis Torner, launched the young playwright on a trajectory that only she could have imagined. In 1989 this play was produced for the San Diego public broadcasting station, KPBS, also directed by Mr. Torner and won an Emmy for Children's Broadcasting. Shortly after the San Diego production, López participated in Maria Irene Fornes' now-legendary Hispanic Playwright's-in-Residence Laboratory in New York City in 1988, another life-changing experience.

THE CHICANA BODY: REAL WOMEN HAVE CURVES

In 1989, López participated in the Teatro de la Esperanza's Isadora Aguirre Latino Playwriting Lab in San Francisco, California, taught by noted Mexican playwright, the late Emilio Carballido. With Carballido's guidance she began to write *Real Women Have Curves* and in 1990 the Teatro de la Esperanza produced the world premiere of that play. That production, directed by Hector Correa, was an instant success, particularly with female audiences. *Real Women Have Curves* became the most produced play written by a Chicana or Chicano for several years. The play has been produced by Latino and non-Latino companies--mainstream and community-based--from California to Florida, from Seattle to New York City. When the play was adapted for the screen, Lopez's reputation as an important theatrical voice was secured.

Like *Simply Maria*, *Real Women Have Curves* is also autobiographical, centering on the character of Ana, a young Chicana who is working in her sister Estela's small sewing factory in East Los Angeles. The play takes place over a period of five days during which the women work to finish an order of dresses. The dramatic action is pushed forward by the women's desire to save the financially strapped business, despite various setbacks, and the situation is given comic life by the conversations between the women about life, love, husbands, boyfriends or would-be suitors, and, of course, their bodies. The women finish the order on time, Estela decides to open her own boutique and in the process the women discover and empower themselves as women and creators.



In Virginia McFerran's words, the women discover "that traditional reality and its norms for women are actually completely unrealistic." This is a play about expectations--what society, especially Mechicano culture--expects of its women and how women might negate those expectations on a path towards liberation from the patriarchy. In the epilogue, Ana addresses the audience directly for the first time and concludes the play with a call for women's unity. She then relates how she did, indeed, attend NYU and when she came back her sister had opened her own boutique.

As the title suggests, *Real Women Have Curves* debates and exposes issues of the female body, especially "fat," "large," "plump" or "voluptuous" bodies, depending upon the gaze of the beholder. Based on her actual experiences, both with her body weight and working in her sister's sewing factory, López places her character at the center of the story as narrator and unhappy teenager who would rather be at NYU studying writing. In her analysis, Maria Teresa Marrero conflates the two prevalent issues in this play, body weight and immigrant status: "The fat body, like the immigrant, requires fundamental alteration in order to 'fit' to be assimilated into the dominant, circulating norms (be they aesthetic or cultural)." Marrero widens the topography of her discussion to include all Latinas struggling to survive in low paying jobs in this country. "To be a woman, undocumented and overweight places these characters as a target in the very center of a three-pronged U.S. cultural bias" Marrero reminds us (Marrero, "Real Women," p. 67). In other words, "three strikes and you're out."

A FATHER RETURNS FROM HELL: FOOD FOR THE DEAD

While in Fornes' workshop López wrote the first draft of her best-known play to date, *Real Women Have Curves*. She then enrolled in the undergraduate program at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts for one year. Whereas the Fornes workshop was a very positive experience for the young playwright, NYU was not as satisfying. Several years later, she wrote: "At that time I felt very alienated. I was the only Latina in my writing class and I felt like no one understood where I was coming from. I was experiencing so much cultural shock that I wanted to write something that celebrated my culture." Roused by her feelings of alienation, López



mined creativity out of adversity and began to write a one-act comedy titled *Food for the Dead*. But she had to come back to California to see Chicanas and Chicanos interpreting her characters.

In the fall of 1989 López entered the undergraduate theatre program at the University of California at San Diego, eager to take advantage of the graduate actors and directors in the newly established graduate program in Hispanic-American theatre.” Laura Esparza directed an early draft of *Food for the Dead* in the fall of 1989 with Latina and Latino graduate and undergraduate actors. Although this play is important for its treatment of a gay Chicano character, the play’s real focus is on the liberation of a Mexican mother. Further, the use of devils, Hell and damnation, locate this play in the Spanish religious folk tradition as another modern morality play, complete with Lucifer and a Hells’ Mouth spewing fire and smoke.

The action of *Food for the Dead* takes place on Halloween, the night Candela is concluding her nine-year mourning period for her husband, Rubén. Her grown children come home for this special event and we learn about each of the characters through their interaction at the dinner table. Candela is finally letting go of Rubén’s macho grip. “I am going to say good-bye to Rubén and hello to the new me” she tells her children. Candela has only one more house payment, she is taking night school classes and she has even acquired her own credit card. Candela’s children, a quartet of “twenty-something” Chicanos, represent an interesting and provocative spectrum of middle-class Chicana/o identities. The oldest son, José, is married, macho and homophobic. Rosario, the oldest daughter is a Beverly Hills attorney looking for a sperm donor. Her youngest daughter, Gloria, is a student at UCLA and wants to move into a commune with her Anglo boyfriend, Siddhartha. And the youngest son, Jesús, is a gay artist. But the most interesting and the most developed of the characters is really Candela. Here is a Mexican mother, liberating herself from the traditional and stereotypical role expected of her.

López is once again critical of Mexican patriarchal values, taking full advantage of her arsenal of creative and humorous devices to ridicule machismo. When Jesús reveals the fact that he is gay, an outraged Rubén returns from the dead and we discover that he is a larger-than-life parody of the Macho husband and father, interested in himself and his appetites



alone. All Rubén wants to do before he “Beats the maricón” (fag) out of his son, is eat. When Candela asks him, “Didn’t they feed you in hell?” he responds, “Yes, but in hell all the Mexican restaurants are full.” Rubén’s excessive behavior and the fact that he went to Hell tell us that he was not a good man. Indeed, it is revealed that this homophobic died while having sex with his male cousin.

When the Devil arrives, disguised as an Avon Lady, “she” demonstrates a new make up called “Lucifermagic,” guaranteed to “cover up black eyes, scars, scratches, cuts on the face....Women in East L.A. are placing large orders,” inferring that Rubén was abusive. Rubén is indicted by the author with the Devil’s litany of physical abuses. Indeed, by telling us that “Lucifermagic” is “selling like hotcakes” in East Los Angeles, López implicates an entire community. When Rubén is dragged back “down” to Hell, in the fire and smoke, the moment recalls the very roots of Spanish religious folk theatre. A “miracle” has happened and once the man is gone, the family can go on with their lives, free of his machismo and homophobia, redeemed from society’s censure.

COMIC MONOLOGUES GIVE LATINAS A VOICE: CONFESSIONS OF WOMEN FROM EAST L.A.

For her next play, *Confessions of Women From East L.A.*, our playwright moves from plays to monologues. The world premiere of this play was directed by William Virchis for Teatro Máscara Mágica in San Diego, California in 1996 and later produced by the Teatro Campesino in San Juan Bautista. “Confessions” is an ensemble piece for four versatile actresses, giving each woman opportunities to explore a variety of characters. Although the play locates these Latinas in East L.A., they could be in any city in this country with a population of Latinas and Latinos. The play opens with a motivational speaker, Victoria Marquez-Bernstein, Ph.D., ostensibly speaking to a group of Latina high school students but including the entire audience. This character and her message were originally inspired by Bettina R. Flores’s self-help guide titled, *Chiquita’s Cocoon: A Cinderella Complex* (1990) . And although Dr. Marquez-Bernstein’s character sometimes parodies self-help gurus, her message, like Ms. Flores’, is mostly sincere. Because the character speaks directly to the audience



from the very beginning of the piece, the audience is not only included, but implicated. In the previous plays in this volume the fourth wall separates the audience from the characters, inferring their participation; in this play audience members are included, even to the point of active participation.

As different characters come forward to “confess,” the other three actresses portray either audience members (e.g. high school girls) listening attentively, or assume male roles, such as a priest. As each monologue discloses “confessions” of various sorts, the listener(s) remain silent witnesses. The themes vary but are all promoting equality and opportunity for Latinas and by extension, all women. But the men in the audience will have to be careful not to assume the characters are talking about them—unless they fit the profiles: macho, sexist, abuser, narcissist, and etc. “There’s a macho inside each and every one of you Latinos,” the play is telling the men and hopefully, we males can learn from the truth being told to power. Most importantly, the monologues give voice to the too-often voiceless women of any barrio, USA.

López’s writing and acting careers extend to television as well. In 1993 she was a staff writer for Fox’s Living Single comedy series and in 1994 she was a writer, performer and segment producer for Culture Clash, also for Fox Television. In the fall of 1998 López entered the graduate program in screenwriting in the School of Theatre, Film and Television of the University of California at Los Angeles. In 2000 López achieved her ultimate goal of founding a theatre, CASA 0101, so named for the digital revolution happening in the U.S. and her beloved Boyle Heights. Many plays, performances, workshops and other empowering events have been held at CASA 0101. Originally located in a storefront, the company will move-into a newly-remodeled 99-seat theatre and performing arts center in 2011. López is also involved in film and television production, empowering other Latinas as well as Latinos to produce their own narratives. While for some, this would be a “miracle,” for López it will be the logical outcome of her ambition, talent and tenacity.

REINSCRIBING THE CONQUEST: UNCONQUERED SPIRITS

In 1994-95 López’s historical drama, Unconquered Spirits received its



world premiere, produced by the Theatre Department of California State University, Northridge, directed by Prof. Ana Marie Garcia. *Unconquered Spirits* is López's homage to La Llorona as well as to the Mechicana pecan shellers who went on strike in San Antonio, Texas in 1938. In her play López combines myth with history, taking her audience back and forth through time and place, from the early twentieth century to the sixteenth century and back. Always, La Llorona is a presence and a character. In this epic historico-mythico play the playwright attempts to draw parallels between the present and past conditions of women in Mexico and in the U.S. She is also intent on redeeming La Llorona and all women from their marginalized and demonized positions.

López serves two histories in this play. She reminds her audience of the abuses of the Colonial Church and she also brings an important event in twentieth-century Mechicana (read: women's) labor struggles to light. With La Llorona as symbol of all oppressed Mechicanas, *Unconquered Spirits* gives women a voice and a reason. While most tales of La Llorona simply tell of this (anonymous) "evil woman who killed her children," few of the story tellers inform their listeners of who she was and why she did what she did. In many versions, La Llorona is conflated with La Malinche, Cortés's mistress and alleged "traitor of the Mexican people." But in the words of Aida Hurtado, "...most recently Chicana feminists have reinterpreted La Malinche's role in the conquest of Mexico from traitor to that of a brilliant woman whose ability to learn different languages was unsurpassed by any of her contemporaries" . Just as many Chicana writers and critics are re-visiting the Malinche myth, López, too, redeems her, and thus all women, in her version of the Malinche/Llorona myth. But the playwright does not redeem the Church for its role in the colonization, suppression and genocide of the Américas.

Sincerely,

Jorge A. Huerta, Ph.D.



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RWHC

Real Women Have Curves is dedicated to the women on whom these characters are loosely based, my mother Catalina Perales and my sister Esther López, S. Orbach, the author of *Fat is a Feminist Issue*, and to all the undocumented and now documented garment workers of Los Angeles.

SIMPLY MARIA OR THE AMERICAN DREAM is dedicated to Luis Valdez, who showed me that theater belonged to all people, to my mother Catalina who taught me how to tell stories, and to my father Rosendo who gave me the courage to dream.

CONFESSIONS OF WOMEN FROM EAST L.A.

is dedicated to the Mexican woman who sells corn on the cob on the corner of First Street and St. Louis in Boyle Heights, Dr. Maria Viramontes De Marin, my mother the telenovela addict, Jon Mercedes III, William Alejandro Virchis, Catalina Maynard, and Keisuke Fukuda.

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is dedicated to La Llorona and all the “crying women” throughout history; to my mother Catalina; Emma Tenayuca for her courage beyond her years; Cal State, Northridge Chicano Studies Professor Rudolfo Acuña; author Rudolfo Anaya, historian Jose López, and to the unconquered spirit of the Chicana/Chicano.

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REAL WOMEN HAVE CURVES





REAL WOMEN HAVE CURVES

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

When I was very young my best friend and I were walking to the corner store. My parents had warned me not to tell anyone I didn't have "papers" and to be careful walking the streets. On the way to the store we saw "la migra" (INS/immigration/Border Patrol). I quickly turned to my friend and tried to "act white." I spoke in English and talked about Jordache jeans and Barbie dolls hoping no one would suspect us. When I finally got my legal residence card, I remembered this incident knowing that I would never have to hide and be afraid again. I also laughed at my naivete and fear because what I had thought was la migra was only the L.A. Police Meter Maid.

In 1987 the Simpson-Rodino Amnesty Law, designed to stop the influx of undocumented people entering the country, granted thousands of undocumented people living in the U.S. since 1982 legal residency. This was an opportunity of a lifetime. However, thousands, not trusting the government, hesitated to apply, fearing this was a scheme to deport them. They, like me, couldn't believe that after hiding and being persecuted for so long they were finally going to have the freedom to live and work in this country.

I got my residence card soon after I graduated from high school and was then able to apply to college. I had been accepted to New York University, but I had to wait a year to be eligible for financial aid. During this year I worked at Mc-Donald's, but I hated it. Then, desperate for a new job, I asked my sister to let me work at her tiny sewing factory. I worked there for five months and my experiences at the factory served as inspiration for REAL WOMEN HAVE CURVES. At the factory there were a few Latina women, all older than me.



They liked working for my sister because she wasn't stingy. We spent so much time together working, sweating and laughing, that we bonded. I remember feeling blessed that I was a woman because male bonding could never compare with what happens when women work together. We had something special and I wanted to show the world.

In the U.S. undocumented people are referred to as "illegal aliens" which conjures up in our minds the image of extraterrestrial beings who are not human, who do not bleed when they're cut, who do not cry when they feel pain, who do not have fears, dreams and hopes...Undocumented people have been used as scapegoats for so many of the problems in the U.S., from drugs and violence, to the economy. I hope that someday this country recognizes the very important contributions of undocumented people and remembers that they too came to this country in search of a better life.

Josefina López

Los Angeles

March, 1992



CASA 0101 & LA THEATER PROJECT present

REAL WOMEN HAVE CURVES

WRITTEN BY JOSEFINA LÓPEZ
PRODUCED BY CALYSTA WATSON

DIRECTED BY ANETTE JELTSJE JACOBS
STARRING: Ramona Gonzales, Yolanda Gonzalez, Margie Gutierrez, Gabriela López, Miriam Moses

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REAL WOMEN HAVE CURVES

ACT ONE

SETTING

A tiny sewing factory in East Los Angeles.

TIME: The first week of September 1987.

CHARACTERS

ANA 18, plump and pretty, sister of Estela, daughter of Carmen. She is a recent high school graduate and a young feminist

ESTELA 24, plump, plain-looking, owner of the “Garcia Sewing Factory”

CARMEN 48, a short, large woman, mother of Ana and Estela. She has a talent for storytelling

PANCHA 32, a huge woman who is very mellow in her ways, but quick with her tongue

ROSALI 29, only a bit plump in comparison to the rest of the women. She is sweet and easygoing



SCENE ONE: MONDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 7, 1987,
ABOUT 7:00 A.M.

AT RISE: The stage becomes visible. The clock on the wall shows it is 6:59 a.m. Keys are heard outside the door. The door opens. ANA and CARMEN enter. ANA drags herself in, goes directly to the electricity box and switches it on. Automatically all the machines “hummmm” loudly. The lights turn on at different times. The radio also blasts on with a song in Spanish. CARMEN quickly turns off the radio. She puts her lunch on the table. ANA slumps on a machine. CARMEN then gets a broom and uses it to get a mousetrap from underneath the table. She prays that today will be the day she caught the mouse. She sees the mousetrap empty and is very disappointed.

CARMEN. ¡Pinche rata! I’ll get you. (*CARMEN returns the broom. She takes two dollars from her purse, approaches ANA and presents them to her.*) Ten. Go to the bakery.

ANA. No. I want to go back to sleep!

CARMEN. ¡Huevona! If we don’t help your sister who else is going to? She already works all hours of the night trying to finish the dresses. Por fin she’s doing something productive with her life.

ANA. I know I’m trying to be supportive, **ayy!** I don’t want to go to the bakery. I don’t want any bread.

CARMEN. That’s good, at least you won’t get fatter.

ANA. ¡Amá!

CARMEN. I only tell you for your own good. Bueno, I’ll go get the bread myself, but you better not get any when I bring it. (*CARMEN walks to the door.*) Ana, don’t forget to close the doors. This street is full of winos and drug addicts. And don’t you open the door to any strangers!

ANA. Yeah, yeah, I know! I’m not a kid. (*ANA locks both doors with a key. She goes toward the toilet and turns on the water in the sink. ANA splashes water on her face to awaken. She sticks her hand behind the toilet seat and gets out a notebook and a pen. Spotlight on ANA. She sits and writes the following:*) Monday, September 7, 1987...I don’t want to be here! I only come because my mother practically drags me out of bed and into the car and into the factory. She pounds on the...No...(Scratches “pounds.”) She knocks on...No...(She scratches “knocks.”) She pounds on the garage wall, and since I think it’s an earthquake, I run out. Then she catches me and I become her prisoner...Is it selfish of me not to want to wake up every morning at 6:30 a.m., Saturdays included, to come work here for 67 dollars a week? Oh, but such is the life of



a Chicana in the garment industry. Cheap labor...I've been trying to hint to my sister for a raise, but she says I don't work fast enough for her to pay me minimum wage...The weeks get longer and I can't believe I've ended up here. I just graduated from high school...Most of my friends are in college...It's as if I'm going backwards. I'm doing the work that mostly illegal aliens do... (*Scratches "illegal aliens."*) No, "undocumented workers"...or else it sounds like these people come from Mars...Soon I will have my "Temporary Residence Card," then after two years, my green card...I'm happy to finally be legal, but I thought things would be different...What I really want to do is write...

CARMEN (*off, interrupting*). Ana, open the door! (*CARMEN pounds on the door outside. ANA quickly puts her writing away and goes to open the door.*) Hurry up! There's a wino following me! (*ANA gets the keys and unlocks both doors.*) Hurry! He's been following me from the bakery.

(*ANA opens the first door. CARMEN is behind the bar door and is impatiently waiting for ANA to open it. ANA opens the door. CARMEN hurries in nervously. ANA quickly shuts the doors. ANA looks out the window.*)

ANA. Amá, that's not a wino, it's an "Alelullah"!

CARMEN. But he was following me!

ANA. I know, those witnesses don't give up. (*CARMEN puts the bag of bread on the table. She fills a small pot with water and puts it on the little hot plate to boil the water for coffee.*)

CARMEN. Pos yo ya no veo. I can't see a thing. (*CARMEN goes to her purse and takes out her glasses. She puts them on. She looks out the window and sees no one.*) I should retire and be an abuelita by now, taking care of grandchildren...I don't know why I work, I have arthritis in my hands, I'm losing my sight from all this sewing, and this arm, I can hardly move it anymore...(*ANA does not pay attention as usual.*)

ANA (*unsympathetically*). Yeah, Amá.

CARMEN. I wonder where's Estela. She should have been here by now.

ANA. I thought she left the house early.

(*PANCHA appears behind the bar door.*)

PANCHA. Buenos días, Doña Carmen. Can you open the door?

CARMEN. Buenos días, Pancha. ¿Cómo está?

PANCHA. Not too bad.



CARMEN. Que bien. I brought my mole today for all of us.

PANCHA. You're so generous, Doña Carmen.

CARMEN. It was in the 'frigerator for three days, and I thought it was turning green, so I brought it. Why let it go to waste?

PANCHA. Is it still good?

CARMEN. Of course, I make great mole.

(ROSALI appears behind the bar door.)

ROSALI. Doña Carmen, the door.

CARMEN. It's open, Rosalí. Buenos días. How are you?

ROSALI *(entering)*. Okay, like always, Doña Carmen.

CARMEN. I brought my mole for all of us.

ROSALI. Did you? Ayy, gracias, but remember I'm on a diet.

CARMEN. Just try a small taco, no te va hacer daño. Try it.

ROSALI. I'm sure it's delicious, but I'm this close to being a size seven.

CARMEN. Sí. You're looking thinner now. How are you doing it?

ROSALI. I'm on a secret diet...It's from the Orient.

CARMEN. A-ha...It's true, those Japanese women are always skinny. Pues, give me your secret, Rosalí. Maybe this way I can lose this ball of fat! *(She squeezes her stomach.)* No mas mira que pareso. You can't even see my waist anymore. But you know what it really is. It's just water. After having so many babies I just stopped getting rid of the water. It's as if I'm clogged. *(ROSALI and ANA laugh.)*

ROSALI. Sí, Doña Carmen.

ANA. Yeah, sure, Amá!

CARMEN. ¿Y tu? Why do you laugh? You're getting there yourself. When I was your age I wasn't as fat as you. And look at your chichis.

ANA. ¡Amá!

CARMEN *(grabs ANA's breasts as if weighing them)*. They must weigh five pounds each.

ANA. Amá, don't touch me like that!



ROSALI. Where's Estela?

CARMEN. We don't know. Ana, I think you better call home now and check if she's there.

ROSALI. Because her torment is outside washing his car.

ALL. He is?

(From under a large blanket on the floor ESTELA jumps out. The WOMEN are startled and scream, but they quickly join her as she runs to the window to spy on her Tormento.)

ESTELA. ¡Ayy que buenote! He's so cute.

ANA. Don't exaggerate.

ESTELA. ¡Mi Tormento! ¡O mi Tormento!

CARMEN. We thought you left home early.

ESTELA. No, I worked so late last night I decided to sleep here.

CARMEN. Then why didn't you tell us when—

ESTELA. I heard you come in, but I wanted to listen in on your chisme about me, Amá.

CARMEN. Me? I don't gossip!

ESTELA. Sure, Amá...I'm going to the store. *(ESTELA runs to the mirror.)*

PANCHA. I don't know why you bother, all he cares about is his car.

CARMEN. Vénganse, I think the water is ready. *(The WOMEN gather around the table for coffee. PANCHA and CARMEN grab bread. ESTELA goes to the bathroom and brushes her hair, puts on lipstick, then she puts on a girdle under her skirt, which she has great trouble getting on, but she is determined. She grabs a deodorant stick and applies it. She also gets a bottle of perfume and sprays it accordingly.)*

ESTELA. Aquí por si me abraza. *(She sprays her wrist.)*

ANA *(mocks ESTELA in front of the WOMEN)*. Here in case he hugs me.

ESTELA. Aquí por si me besa. *(She sprays her neck.)*

ANA. Here in case he kisses me.

ESTELA. Y aquí por si se pasa. *(She sprays under her skirt.)*



ANA. And here in case he...you know what. (*The WOMEN are by the door and windows looking out. ESTELA comes out of the bathroom.*)

ROSALI. He's gone.

CARMEN. Sí, ya se fue.

ESTELA. No! Are you sure? (*ESTELA goes toward the door, before she reaches it CARMEN shuts the door.*)

CARMEN (*scared*). ¡Dios mio! (*CARMEN quickly takes a drink of her coffee and can hardly breathe afterwards.*)

ESTELA. ¿Qué? ¿Amá, qué pasa?

CARMEN. I saw a van!

ROSALI. What van?

CARMEN. ¡La migra! (*All the WOMEN scatter and hide waiting to be discovered. Then after a few seconds PANCHA makes a realization.*)

PANCHA. Pero, why are we hiding? We're all legal now.

CARMEN. ¡Ayy, de veras! I forget! All those years of being an ilegal, I still can't get used to it.

PANCHA. Me too! (*She picks up a piece of bread.*) I think I just lost my appetite.

ROSALI. I'm not scared of it! I used to work in factories and whenever they did a raid, I'd always sneak out through the bathroom window, y ya.

ANA. Last night I heard on the news that la migra patrol is planning to raid a lot of places.

PANCHA. They're going to get mean trying to enforce that Amnesty law.

ANA. Thank God, I'm legal. I will never have to lie on applications anymore, except maybe about my weight...

ROSALI. ¿Sabén qué? Yesterday I got my first credit card.

CARMEN. ¿Pos cómo le hiciste? How?

ROSALI. I lied on the application and I got an Americana Express.

ANA. And now you have two green cards and you never leave home without them. (*ANA laughs her head off, but none of the WOMEN get the joke. ANA slowly shuts up.*)



PANCHA. Doña Carmen, let those men in their van come! Who cares? We're all legal now! (*PANCHA goes to the door and opens it all the way. They all smile in relief and pride, then ESTELA, who has been stuffing her face, finally speaks up.*)

ESTELA. I'm not. (*PANCHA slams the door shut.*)

EVERYONE. You're not?!!!

ANA. But you went with me to get the fingerprints and the medical examination.

ESTELA. I didn't send them in.

ROSALI. But you qualify.

ESTELA. I have a criminal record.

EVERYONE. No!

ESTELA. So I won't apply until I clear it.

CARMEN. Estela, what did you do?

PANCHA. ¿Qué hiciste?

ESTELA. Well, actually, I did two things.

CARMEN. Two?! ¿Y por qué no me habias dicho? Why is the mother always the last one to know?

ESTELA. Because one is very embarrassing—

CARMEN. ¡Aver dime, condenada! What have you done?

ESTELA. I was arrested for illegal possession of—

ROSALI. Marijuana?!

PANCHA. A gun?!

ESTELA. A lobster.

EVERYONE. No!

ESTELA. Out of season!

CARMEN. ¡Mentirosa!

WOMEN. You're kidding!

ESTELA. A-ha! I'm not lying! I almost got handcuffed and taken to jail. Trying



to “abduct” a lobster is taken very seriously in Santa Monica Beach. They wanted me to appear in court and I never did.

PANCHA. That’s not a serious crime; ¿de qué te apuras? Why worry?

CARMEN (*not amused*). That was the first crime? You mentioned two.

ESTELA. I’m being sued for not keeping up with my payments on the machines.

ANA. Y los eight thousand dollars you got from your accident settlement weren’t enough?

CARMEN. But I thought that everything was paid for.

ESTELA. I used most of it for a down-payment, but I still needed a new steam iron, the over-lock...I thought I could make the monthly payments if everything went as planned.

CARMEN. ¿Pos qué paso?

PANCHA. What happened?

ESTELA. You know that we never finish on time. So the Glitz company doesn’t pay me until we do.

ROSALI. Pero the orders are too big. We need at least two more seamstresses.

ESTELA. Pues sí. But the money they pay me is not enough to hire any more help. So because we get behind, they don’t pay, I can’t pay you, and I can’t pay those pigs that sold me those machines.

CARMEN. Ayyy, Estela, how much do you owe?

ESTELA. Two thousand dollars...

CARMEN. ¡Hora si que estamos bien jodidas! (*The WOMEN sigh hopelessly.*)

ESTELA. ...I tried. I sent some money and explained the situation to them two weeks ago, but I got a letter from their lawyer. They’re taking me to court...

PANCHA. So you had money two weeks ago? Hey, hey, you told us you couldn’t pay us because you didn’t have any money. You had money! Here we are bien pobres, I can’t even pay for the bus sometimes, and you care more about your machines than us.

ESTELA. They’re going to take everything!

ROSALI. ¡¿Qué?!



ESTELA. They're going to repossess everything if I don't pay them. And if I appear in court they'll find out that I don't have any papers.

ANA. Then why don't you apply for Amnesty?

ESTELA. Because I won't get it if they find out about my lawsuit.

ANA. You don't know that. Estela, you should talk to this lawyer I know...

ESTELA. Ana, you know I can't afford a lawyer!

CARMEN. Ayy, Estela, ¡ya ni la friegas! (*ESTELA fights the urge to cry.*)

ROSALI. If I had money I'd lend it to you.

PANCHA (*aside*). I wouldn't.

ROSALI (*kindly*). But I don't have any money because you haven't paid me.

ESTELA. Miren, the Glitz company has promised to pay me for the last two weeks and this week if we get the order in by Friday.

ANA. How much of the order is left?

ESTELA. About 100 dresses.

PANCHA. N'ombre. By this Friday? What do they think we are? Machines?

ESTELA. But they're not that difficult! Amá, you're so fast. This would be a cinch for you. All you have to do are the blusas on the dresses. Rosalí, the over-lock work is simple. It's a lot, but you're the best at it. And, Pancha, all you have to do is sew the skirts. The skirts are the easiest to sew. Now, Ana, with you doing all the ironing, we'll get it done by Friday. You see if we do little by little at what we do best...¡Andenle! We can do it. ¿Verá que sí, Ana?

ANA (*uncertain*). Sure we can.

ESTELA. ¿Vera que sí, Amá?

CARMEN. Pos we can try.

ROSALI. Estela, we can do it. (*ESTELA looks to PANCHA. PANCHA remains quiet. CARMEN breaks their stare.*)

CARMEN. Wouldn't it be funny if the migra came and instead of taking the employees like they usually do, they take the patrona. (*The WOMEN laugh at the thought.*)

ESTELA. Don't laugh! It could happen. (*The WOMEN become silent.*)

CARMEN. Ayy, Estela, I'm just kidding. I'm just trying to make you feel better.



(Beat.)

ROSALI. Bueno, let's try to be serious...I'll do the zippers.

ESTELA. Yes, por favor. And, Pancha, please do the hems on the skirts.

PANCHA. The machine is not working.

ESTELA. Not again! *(ESTELA goes to the machine. She fusses around with it trying to make it work. With confidence.)* There. It should be ready. Try it. *(PANCHA sits down on a chair and tries the machine. She steps on the pedal and the machine makes an awful noise. Then it shoots off electric sparks and explodes. PANCHA quickly gets away from the machine. The WOMEN hide under the machines.)*

WOMEN. ¡Ay, ay, ay!

ESTELA. Augghh! All this equipment is junk! *(ESTELA throws a thread spool at the machine and it explodes again.)* I was so stupid to buy this factory! *(ESTELA fights the urge to cry in frustration. The WOMEN stare at her helplessly.)*

CARMEN. Pos no nos queda otra. Pancha, can you do the hems by hand?

PANCHA. Bueno, I guess I have to.

ESTELA. Gracias...Ana, turn on the iron, I'm going to need you to do the ironing all this week...Tell me when the iron gets hot and I'll show you what you have to do.

CARMEN. I'll help Rosalí with the zippers.

ESTELA. No...I need you to do the blusas on size 7/8.

CARMEN. Didn't I already do them?

ESTELA. No.

CARMEN. I guess it was size 13/14 then.

ESTELA. You couldn't have, because there is no size 13/14 for this dress style, Amá.

CARMEN. No?...Hoye did you get any more pink thread from the Glitz?

ESTELA. Oh, no. I forgot...Go ahead and use the over-lock machine. That is already set up with thread.

ANA. What does the over-lock do?

ROSALI. It's what keeps the material from coming apart. *(ROSALI shows*



ANA.)

CARMEN. Why don't you give me the pink thread from the over-lock machine, then when you get the thread you can set it up again?

ESTELA. No. I don't know how to set it up on that new machine.

CARMEN. Rosalí can do that later. She knows how to do it; qué no, Rosalí?

ROSALI. Sí, Doña Carmen.

ESTELA. Why don't you just do what I'm asking you to do?

CARMEN. Estela, no seas terca. I know what I'm telling you.

ESTELA. So do I. I want to do things differently. I want us to work like an assembly line.

CARMEN. Leave that to the big factories. I've been working long enough to know—

ESTELA. I haven't been working long enough, but I'm intelligent enough to—

CARMEN. Estela, my way is better!

ESTELA. Why do you think your way is better? All my life your way has been better. Maybe that's why my life is so screwed up!

CARMEN. ¡Desgraciada! I'm only doing it to help you!

ESTELA. Because you know I won't be getting married any time soon so you want to make sure I'm doing something productive with my life so I can support myself. I don't need your help! (*Beat.*)

CARMEN. Where did all that come from? I thought we were arguing about the thread.

ESTELA. You know what I mean. You know I'm right!

CARMEN. All right. If you want me to do the over-lock work I'll do it...I have to remember I work for you now.

ESTELA. Amá, don't give me that!

CARMEN. What?

ESTELA. Guilt!

CARMEN. Well, it's true! It's not usual that a mother works for her daughter. So I have to stop being your mother and just be a regular employee that you can boss around and tell what to do.



ESTELA. ¡Ayy, Amá, parele! You are my mother, but sometimes you get out of line. How can I tell Rosalí and Pancha to stop gossiping when it's you who initiates the chisme? You're a bad example!

CARMEN. Ay, sí. Blame me! ¡Echame la culpa! You gossip too when it's convenient.

ESTELA. Look, Amá, I don't want to argue with you anymore. I'm frustrated enough by the thought that I might get deported, at the sight of that machine, and at the thought that I am the biggest fool for buying all this junk. So I don't need my mother to make my life any worse! (*Beat.*)

CARMEN. So what are we going to do about the thread?

ESTELA. ¡Oiiiiii! And we're back to the same thing! (*She goes to the over-lock machine and angrily tears a thread spool from the machine and throws it at CARMEN.*) Here! ¡Tenga! (*The thread spool misses CARMEN by a hair.*)

CARMEN (*dramatically*). ¡Pegame, pegame! Go ahead! Hit me! God's gonna punish you for enojona!

ANA. Estela, the iron is ready.

ESTELA. Amá, give me a finished dress from the box.

CARMEN. Where are they?

ESTELA. Right next to you by the pile.

CARMEN. Qué size?

ESTELA. For the mannequin.

CARMEN. What size is it?

ROSALI. It's a size seven, Doña Carmen.

CARMEN (*sarcastically*). Thank you, Rosali. (*CARMEN digs into the box and gets a dress. She gives it to ESTELA who begins to iron the dress carefully.*)

ESTELA (*to ANA*). Pay close attention to how I'm ironing this dress. Always, always use the steam. And don't burn the tul, por favor. On the skirt just a couple of strokes to make it look decent. It's real easy, just don't burn the tul, okay?

ANA. Okay.

ESTELA. Check the water, and when it gets low... Tell me so I can send you to buy some more water for it.



ANA. Why do you have to buy the water?

ESTELA. Because regular water is too dirty, it needs distilled water for clean steam. (*ESTELA finishes ironing the dress. She shakes it a bit then puts it on the mannequin. All the WOMEN stare at the dress.*)

ROSALI. Que bonito. How I would like to wear a dress like that.

PANCHA. But first you have to turn into a stick to wear something like that.

ROSALI. Yeah, but they're worth it.

ANA. How much do they pay us for making these dresses?

ROSALI. Estela, we get thirteen dollars for these, no?

ANA. Oh, yeah? How much do they sell them for at the stores?

ESTELA. They tell me they sell them at Bloomingdale's for about two hundred dollars.

WOMEN. ¿¿Qué?!!

ANA. Dang!! (*Lights fade.*)

SCENE TWO: A FEW HOURS LATER, ABOUT 11:30 A.M.

AT RISE: Lights come on. The WOMEN are busy working. The "Cucaracha" is played on the horn by the lunch mobile outside announcing its arrival.

ANA. Okay, there's the lonchera. Anybody want anything for lunch?

CARMEN. The lonchera is here already?

ESTELA. Ana, just hurry back.

ROSALI. Can you get me something to drink? How much are those tomato juices?

ANA. A V-8?

ROSALI. Sí, eso.

ANA. I think they're 80 cents. You want anything else?

ROSALI. No, no, I'm not hungry.

ESTELA. Ana, lend me a dollar.

ANA. What do you think I am? A bank? This is the third time. One can only



go so far on 67 dollars a week.

ESTELA. Ana, if you are not happy here go back to working at McDonald's.

ANA. I would...(*CARMEN stares at ANA.*)...But...You still want to borrow the dollar?

ESTELA. Are you going to charge me interest?

ANA. Of course. What do you want me to buy you?

ESTELA. A burrito de chicharrón.

ANA. Pancha, do you want anything?

PANCHA. Sí. Bring me four tacos.

CARMEN. Pancha, aren't you going to want some of my mole?

PANCHA. Ana, bring me three tacos, no más. (*PANCHA gives ANA money.*)

ESTELA. Ana, if you have money left, could you buy some distilled water at the corner store?

ANA. Anything else, boss? (*ANA leaves to buy the food. CARMEN waits until ESTELA shuts the door.*)

CARMEN. Bueno, if we are already going to hell for being a bunch of chismosas, there's no use in hiding it any longer. (*CARMEN digs into a pile of dresses and takes out a book. She shows it to PANCHA and ROSALI. CARMEN whispers.*) ¡Miren! (*ROSALI quickly sees the illustrations on the front cover and is shocked.*)

ROSALI. Doña Carmen!

CARMEN. I was cleaning the garage and I found a whole pile of dirty books. I think they belong to my oldest son.

PANCHA. What's the book called?

ROSALI (*reading title*). Two Hundred Sexual Positions Illustrated.

PANCHA. I didn't know there were so many. (*ROSALI and PANCHA gather around CARMEN to look at the book. ESTELA has not noticed them. Instead she notices a letter being dropped in the mail slot. ESTELA reads the letter.*)

ROSALI (*shocked*). Ay, Dios, how can these women do this?

PANCHA. They're probably gymnasts.

CARMEN. The photographer must have used a special lens on this picture.



PANCHA. Which picture?

CARMEN. The one on page 69.

ROSALI. I didn't know people could do that.

PANCHA. ¡Híjole! Imagine if you had married this man, and you had never seen him until your wedding night.

CARMEN. ¡N'ombre, ni lo mande dios! How it hurt with a regular one.

PANCHA. Mire, Doña Carmen. This woman looks like you, but that doesn't stop her.

CARMEN. Ahh. She's so big. No le da verguenza.

ROSALI. I didn't know they had large women in porno books.

PANCHA. I guess some men enjoy watching big women.

ESTELA (*sees them looking at the book*). What are you looking at? You're suppose to be working! The food has not gotten here yet.

PANCHA. Estela, come look. It's a dirty book.

ESTELA. Why are you looking at that?

CARMEN. Estela, no mas ven a ver. (*ESTELA hesitates, but is curious and gives in. She sees the pictures of the large women and is shocked.*)

ESTELA. People this fat shouldn't be having sex! Ichhh!

ROSALI. Look, Estela, there's a guy in here that looks like your "Tormento."

ESTELA. Where?!! (*ROSALI shows her, then suddenly the door is kicked open.*)
Aughhhhhh!!!!

(*ANA enters with her hands full of food.*)

PANCHA. Estela, calm down.

ESTELA. I thought it was la migra!

ANA. Sorry! I kicked the door open because my hands are full...

ESTELA. From now on these doors are to remain closed and locked at all times, okay? If you go outside, you knock on the door like this... (*She knocks in code rhythm.*)...so we know it's just one of us. Don't ever kick the door again.

ANA. Isn't that going a bit to extremes?

PANCHA. Vamos a estar como gallinas enjauladas.



ESTELA. No. We just have to be careful.

ROSALI. So how do you do the knock?

ESTELA (*exemplifies*). Knock once. Pause. Then knock twice. Then repeat.

ANA. Well, if it makes you feel better...

ESTELA. Yes, it would.

ANA. All right. Here's the food. (*ANA places the food on the table.*)

ESTELA. Did you remember the water?

ANA. Yeah, I brought the water! (*ANA gives the bottle of water to ESTELA and distributes the food. To the WOMEN:*) What were you doing?

ALL (*hiding the book*). Nothin'.

ANA. What are you hiding?

ALL. Nothin'. (*Pause.*)

PANCHA. We don't want to pervert you.

ANA. You don't want to pervert me more than I've already perverted you?

ROSALI. It's a dirty book.

ANA. Let me see it.

CARMEN. No! You're too young to be looking at these things.

ANA. Fine. You've seen them once, you've seen it all.

PANCHA. Ana!

CARMEN. ¿Qué? Repeat what you just said. Don't tell me you've been "messaging around."

ANA. No. It's just that I probably know more than most of you and you're thinking that you can pervert me. **Stuuuuu~piiid!!**

CARMEN. And how is it that you know so much if you haven't done it?

ANA. ...I read a lot.

PANCHA. But not because you read a lot means you know what's what.

ANA. Go ahead. Ask me anything you always wanted to know about sex but were afraid to ask. I'll tell you. (*All the WOMEN are tempted.*)

ROSALI. How do you masturbate...? (*PANCHA, CARMEN, and ESTELA*



stare at ROSALI in shock.)

ANA. What?

CARMEN. ¡Hijole! If your Apá were to hear you...¡Hijole!

ANA. I wouldn't be talking like this in front of my father.

CARMEN. Can you believe her? Girls nowadays think they know so much that's why they end up panzonas.

ANA. No. They end up pregnant because they don't use contraceptives.

PANCHA. Are you sure all you do is read a lot?

CARMEN. Your husband's not going to like you knowing so much.

PANCHA. A girl shouldn't know so much.

ANA. I'm not a girl, I'm a woman.

PANCHA. Uuy, uy, la Miss Know-it-all.

CARMEN. In my day, a girl became a woman when she lost her virginity.

ANA. That was then. I read somewhere that calling someone a "girl" is just as bad as when white men used to call black men—

CARMEN *(starts to laugh uncontrollably)*. I...I...remember...

ESTELA. Amá, it's 12:20, no more stories. If we gossip people are gonna hear everything outside and even if we close the doors they'll know it's a sewing factory because only women talking chisme can sound like chickens cackling.

CARMEN. But it's what I know how to do best, my reason for living.

ESTELA. I'm begging you. *(CARMEN remains quiet for a few seconds then she begins to laugh uncontrollably again.)*

PANCHA. Why are you laughing? *(CARMEN continues laughing, unable to speak.)*

ANA. ¿Amá, qué le píso? *(The laughter is contagious.)*

CARMEN. I just got a back flash of when I lost my virginity.

ANA. That bad, huh?

CARMEN. The night I eloped with your father on the bike...

ESTELA. Bueno, if the migra deports me we know whose fault it is. Amá, no work, no money, no factory! Is that clear enough?!



CARMEN. Pero, don't get upset. Estela, it's lunch time.

PANCHA. Pues sí.

ESTELA. It gets me so annoyed to hear her talk and talk... And with all the work we have! Just promise me that you'll finish, all right? I'll stop bothering you if you can do that.

WOMEN (*look to each other*). Pues bueno. We promise.

ESTELA. If not you'll go to hell?!

WOMEN (*look to each other again and think about it*). Pues bueno.

CARMEN. Sí, sí, sí, we'll go to hell. Can I continue? Okay, pues after riding on his bike for so long, I had to pee so bad! So we stopped in the mountains somewhere. I ran behind a tree, squatted, and just peed. That night, after we got settled, I didn't know what was going to happen. After we did it, I started itching and scratching down there 'til my cuchupeta got so red. I thought something was wrong, but I asked him and he said it was suppose to hurt and bleed. Then I found out it wasn't him. I had peed on poison ivy. And how it hurt! (*The WOMEN laugh sympathetically and slowly gather around the table to eat.*) Panchita, try some of my mole.

PANCHA (*looking at mole*). But, Doña Carmen, it's green.

CARMEN. It's green mole...Ana, you didn't try some mole. It's real good.

ANA. No way! It looks like...yukkkk!

CARMEN. Aver, Rosalí, come try some. There's plenty.

ROSALI. Thank you, pero, I'm not hungry.

CARMEN. But you haven't eaten anything.

ROSALI. I drink eight glasses of water a day and I don't feel hungry. Water gets rid of the fat.

CARMEN. Ana, you should be drinking eight waters.

ANA. And you should too...Oh no, you get clogged.

ESTELA. Amá, just be very careful with the mole. I don't want any of the dresses getting stained. (*PANCHA scoops some mole with a piece of tortilla. She eats the scoop.*)

CARMEN. You like it, Pancha?

PANCHA (*lying*). Yeah, it's real good, Doña Carmen... (*ROSALI carefully*



strays away from the table and drinks her V-8. ROSALI swallows a pill. She goes to the window and peeks out through the curtain. She spots el Tormento outside.)

ROSALI. ¡Míralo! There's Andrés! Estela, come to the window! Your Tormento is outside! (*PANCHA, CARMEN, and ANA run to the window, beating ESTELA.*)

ESTELA. No, don't go to the window! Get away from the window!

ANA. No one can see us!

ESTELA. Get down! Make some room for me!

CARMEN. I don't see what you could possibly see in him.

ESTELA. He's cute and he likes me.

CARMEN. He doesn't even have good nalgas. They're this small. (*She exemplifies with her hands.*)

ANA. Amá, why are you so preoccupied with the size of a man's butt?

ROSALI. That's not what counts.

CARMEN. Because your father doesn't have any. (*ESTELA goes to the door and opens it. She fixes herself a bit and stands in front of the door.*)

PANCHA. Estela, I thought you said that door was going to remain closed.

ROSALI. Estela, get away from the door, because if the van passes they'll just see the nopal on your forehead and take you away.

ESTELA. But he wants to talk to me. He sent me a letter. (*ESTELA leaves, closing the door. CARMEN and PANCHA are still eating their tacos. They stick to the window like flies.*)

CARMEN. What could he be telling her? She's laughing her head off.

ROSALI. ¡Miren cómo coquetea! What a flirt. You never suspected she had it in her.

PANCHA. She's worse than Ana.

ANA. What's that suppose to mean? (*CARMEN holds her taco carelessly and the mole spills out onto some dresses.*)

PANCHA. ¡Mire, Doña Carmen! You're spilling the mole!

ANA. Amá, Estela is going to kill you!

CARMEN. ¡Ayy, no! (*CARMEN quickly puts the taco on the table. She grabs a*



cloth and tries to clean the dresses.)

PANCHA. ¡Aguas! Here she comes!

CARMEN. What am I going to do?

ANA (*runs to the door and locks it*). Quick, Amá. Hide the dresses! We'll clean them later.

CARMEN. ¿Dónde los escondo?

ROSALI. Anywhere! (*ESTELA tries to open the door. While the women run around hysterically trying to find the best place to hide the dresses.*)

ESTELA. Let me in.

ANA. Who is it?

ESTELA. You know who it is!

ANA. I don't know who. (*She gestures to the women to hurry.*) You think we should open the door? What if it's la migra?

ESTELA. Ana, open the door! (*She pounds on the door.*)

ANA. How do we know it's you?

(*ESTELA finally knocks the secret code and ANA lets her in.*)

ESTELA. When the cat is away the mice come out to play. What were you doing?

WOMEN. Nothing!

CARMEN. Ahora sí. Show us the letter first, and tell us what you talked about.

ESTELA. It's private.

ROSALI. Come on, Estela, no te hagas de rogar, you know you want to show it to us.

ESTELA. ¡Que metiches! This letter is for me. He only intended for me to read it...All right, I'll read it out loud. (*The WOMEN pull out their chairs and get comfortable. ESTELA clears her throat and reads the letter dramatically.*) "Dear Estela..." (*The WOMEN get excited after the first "Dear."*) "Dear Estela...How I dig you. Let me count the waves."

ROSALI. Ahhh, it's a poem.

ESTELA. "Wave one: 'cause you look real nice when you pass by me and say, 'Hi.' Wave two: 'cause you seem real smart. Wave three: 'cause your eyes are



like fresas. And your lips are like mangos, juicy and delicious, listos para chupar.”

PANCHA. Maybe he works at the supermarket in the fruit section.

ESTELA (*continues*). “So how about it? You wanna go cruising down Whittier Boulevard, see a movie, or anything else you wanna do?” I told him I liked the letter a lot. So we’re going to the movies tonight.

ROSALI. To the movies? It sounds serious. But be careful with those wandering hands.

ESTELA. He’s not that kind of guy.

CARMEN. So what are you going to wear? Don’t go dressing up like a scarecrow now.

ESTELA. I don’t dress like that.

CARMEN. That’s why you scare them away.

ESTELA. Como es, Amá. He likes me for me. Didn’t you hear? He said I’m intelligent. He doesn’t care how I dress.

CARMEN. Estela, let me make you a dress, horitita te lo coso.

ESTELA. No. I can dress myself. And anyway, what are we doing sitting around. Lunch is over. Let’s get to work. ¡A trabajar! (*Lights fade out.*)

SCENE THREE: A FEW HOURS LATER, ABOUT 3:45 P.M.

AT RISE: Lights fade in. The WOMEN are busy working in their designated working areas. PANCHA is by the racks attaching strings to hang the dresses.

ANA. Estela, there are no more dresses to iron. What else should I do?

ESTELA. Ah...Pancha, can you show Ana what you are doing? (*ANA goes to the racks. ROSALI turns on the radio.*)

PANCHA (*showing ANA*). Así hazlo. This way. (*ANA quickly understands what she has to do and begins her work. The phone rings. ESTELA picks it up. On the radio we hear the following:*)

RADIO (*voice-over*). It’s 3:45 and another hot, beautiful day in L.A. This is KLOVE—Radio Amor...Now back to our talk show, “Esperanza.”

ESPERANZA (*voice-over*). For those of you who just joined us today we are discussing abusive spouses. We have our last caller on the line. Caller, are you



there?

CALLER (*voice-over*). Hi. I'm not going to give you my name because my husband listens to this station. I wanted to know what I can do to... Well, I want to know how I can talk to my husband when he gets angry.

ESPERANZA (*voice-over*). How long has he been abusive?

CALLER (*voice-over*). Ah... Well, he wasn't like this when we got married... He was always sweet. So I don't know what has happened to him. He tells me if I did whatever he asked he wouldn't have to hit me. But I do what he says and it's still not good enough. Last time he hit me because...

PANCHA (*switches the dial on the radio*). Isn't there anything else?

CARMEN. Pobre mujer, I'm lucky mi viejo doesn't hit me.

ANA. Lucky? Why lucky? It should be expected that he doesn't. That woman should leave her husband. Women have the right to say "no."

PANCHA. You think it's that easy?

ANA. No, she's probably dependent on him financially, or the church tells her to endure, or she's doing it for the children.

PANCHA. You're so young. Did it ever occur to you that maybe she loves him?

ANA. I'm sure she does. But we can't allow ourselves to be abused anymore. We have to assert ourselves. We have to realize that we have rights! We have the right to control our bodies. The right to exercise our sexuality. And the right to take control of our destiny. But it all begins when we start saying... (*ANA quickly climbs on top of a sewing machine to continue preaching.*)... ¡Ya basta! No more! We should learn how to say no! Come on, Amá, say it! Say it!

CARMEN. What?

ANA. Say it! "No!"

CARMEN. Okay, I won't.

ANA. Amá, say "No!"

CARMEN (*as in she won't*). No.

ANA. Good! Rosalí, say it.

ROSALI (*casually*). ¿Pues por qué no? No.

ANA. Pancha, say it. No! (*PANCHA stares at ANA, she won't say it.*)



Ana (on the left and played by Josefina Lopez) tries to get the women to say “NO”. Lupe Ontivero (center and facing the camera), who played Carmen in the San Diego Rep Production, gives Ana a hard time.

REAL WOMEN HAVE CURVES &
OTHER PLAYS BY JOSEFINA LOPEZ



Photo by Ken Jacques, SD Rep



ESTELA. Ya, ya, Norma Rae, get off and get back to work!

PANCHA. Why don't you run for office? Tan pequeña and she thinks and acts like she knows everything.

ANA. I don't know everything, but I know a lot. I read a lot. But it just amazes me to hear you talk the way you do. A women's liberation movement happened 20 years ago, and you act like it hasn't even happened.

PANCHA. Mira, all those gringas shouting about liberation hasn't done a thing for me... And if you were married you would realize it. Bueno, and if you know so much how come you're not in college?

ANA. Because I don't have the money. I have to wait a year to be eligible for financial aid.

PANCHA. I always thought that if you were smart enough a college would give you a scholarship. Maybe you should read some more and get one so you don't have to be here making 67 dollars a week and hearing us talk the way we do. *(A car honking is heard outside.)*

CARMEN. Ya llegó mi viejo. Ana, get ready. ¡Vámonos!

ANA. No, Amá, you go. I'll take the bus... I want to finish this last pile.

CARMEN. You do? Ah, I know why you want to stay, metiche. Bueno. Adiós.

WOMEN. Adiós. *(CARMEN leaves. PANCHA collects her belongings. A car honking is heard outside.)*

PANCHA. I'm leaving too.

ROSALI. Pancha, do you want a ride?

PANCHA. Sí, sí. *(They get ready to leave.)*

ROSALI. Adiós, Estela. Good luck on your date with your Tormento. Well, not too good. I hope you won't need to go to confession tomorrow. *(ROSALI and ESTELA giggle.)* Hasta mañana. *(They leave. Soon after ESTELA hangs up the phone.)*

ANA. So who was that?

ESTELA. María... She called to wish me a happy birthday.

ANA. Isn't it this Friday?

ESTELA. Yes, but she couldn't wait to tell me that she's getting married in three months. She wants me to make her wedding dress. *(They continue working.)* Ana, before el Tormento gets here you have to leave.



ANA. Why?

ESTELA. Because I don't want you writing about it. I know what you do in the bathroom.

ANA. Come on, Estela, where else can I write? I come here and all it is, is "work, work, work" from you and Amá. I go home and then she still wants me to help her cook, and clean...

ESTELA. So what are you writing?

ANA. I'm keeping a journal so when I become "rich and famous" I can write my autobiography.

ESTELA. Ana, who do you think you are? "Rich and famous."

ANA. I'm not going to be stuck here forever.

ESTELA. And I am?

ANA. No...I didn't say that. Amá y Apá, always said that you wouldn't do anything with your life, but you're proving them wrong. It takes a lot of guts and courage to do what you're doing. And even if you're in a mess, you have your own business, at 24! I'm very proud of you.

ESTELA (*a little embarrassed*). All right, Ana, you can stay.

ANA. So when is el Tormento picking you up?

ESTELA. In a few minutes. I won't even have a chance to freshen up. (*ESTELA goes to the sink and washes her face. She stares at herself in the mirror.*) Ana, do you have any makeup?

ANA. Not with me.

ESTELA (*continues to stare at herself with an excited face*). I don't have anything to wear! (*ESTELA runs to look for clothes to wear. ANA goes to the bathroom and sits on the toilet and begins to write. Spotlight on ANA.*)

ANA. Another day and we're in deep...trouble...I keep having arguments with Pancha, and even though she doesn't like me, I feel sort of sorry for her. I wish I could tell her what to do, but she won't listen to me. Like the rest of the women, she won't take me seriously. They make fun of me...So why do I stay?...It's true. I stay. Because no matter how much my mother could try and force me to come, I could decide not to come back. But I do...Why? (*Fade out.*)

(*Lights come on. ESTELA is holding the pink dress. She looks to the bathroom to see if ANA is watching. She then holds the dress to her body as if wearing it. She*



dances slowly with it, imagining herself dancing with el Tormento. Lights slowly fade.)

SCENE FOUR: THE FOLLOWING DAY, ABOUT 7:10 A.M.

AT RISE: Lights come on after a brief pause. On the calendar it is Tuesday, September 8, 1987. On the clock it is 7:10 a.m. Before the lights are fully on, ESTELA's crying is heard. The WOMEN are gathered around her.

ANA. So what happened?!

ESTELA. He...He...

PANCHA. What did he do?

ESTELA. He...He...

ROSALI & ANA. What?!!

ESTELA. I don't want to talk about it! *(She pulls herself together.)* Let's forget about it and get started on the work... Amá, you said you were going to the bakery.

CARMEN. Ah, sí, sí.

ESTELA. Rosalí, how are you doing with the zippers?

ROSALI. I'm halfway done.

ESTELA. Ana, turn on the iron. There are a lot more dresses that need ironing. Pancha, are you almost done with the skirts for size 3/4?

PANCHA. No. I just started that lot a few minutes before I left yesterday.

CARMEN. Does anybody want anything from the bakery?

ESTELA. I want a juice...Ana, could you...? *(ESTELA decides to look in her purse instead. She takes out all of her pennies and gives them to CARMEN.)*

CARMEN. Estela, you can tell me. What could he have possibly done to get you this upset?

ESTELA. You're so stubborn, Amá! I said nothing happened. I'm just over-reacting.

CARMEN. Just remember, I'm your mother. If you can't trust your mother, who can you trust? *(The WOMEN agree with CARMEN, but ESTELA does not give in. CARMEN leaves. Quickly after, before ANA has a chance to lock the*



door, CARMEN runs back in and leans on the door to close it with her body. She is breathing heavily.) It's out there again! Like a vulture!

PANCHA. What?

ALL. ¡La migra! (*They gasp. They all close the curtains and bolt the doors.*)

ROSALI. Was it going by slow or was it going by fast?

CARMEN. It was going slow like it was going to turn at the corner and circle around the block and come back!

ANA. You don't know that for sure!

CARMEN. Estela, it just occurred to me. Why don't you go home and work in the garage on our old sewing machine?

ESTELA. I could do that. But I can't. I don't trust you.

ROSALI. We'll work. Just go! ¡Rápido!

ESTELA. And you'll work?

ALL. Yes!!

ESTELA. What should I take with me to work on?

ROSALI. Just go! I'll get my Jaime to take you the work. Go!

ESTELA. Okay! (*ESTELA begins to leave. She opens the door.*) He's out there! (*ESTELA runs to the bathroom.*)

ANA. Who? The man in the van?

PANCHA. No. ¡El Tormento!

ROSALI. Estela, come out of there! Go before they come. ¡Por favor!

CARMEN. Estela, get out of there right now! ¡No seas mensa! Men are not worth crying over. And they're certainly not worth you getting deported. (*CARMEN waits for ESTELA to come out.*) Vas a verlo. ¡Entonces a la fuerza! (*CARMEN pulls on the curtain and tries to drag ESTELA out. ESTELA wraps herself with the curtain and CARMEN is unable to get her out.*)

ESTELA. No! Leave me alone! I'm not coming out!

ANA. Estela, who's that gringa he's kissing? (*The curtain flies open and ESTELA races to the door.*)

ESTELA. Who?!! Where?!!



ANA. I lied. Now go home! (ANA pushes ESTELA out the door and locks it. Beat.)

ROSALI (looking out of the window). I don't think they're coming.

PANCHA. Are you sure you saw it, Doña Carmen?

ANA. They would have been here by now. ¿Qué no?

CARMEN. I guess so...I don't understand. (They sigh in relief.)

ESTELA (*offstage, knocking on the door*). Ana, let me in.

(*ESTELA knocks on the door and ANA finally lets her in.*)

ESTELA. I'm going to stay.

CARMEN. All right. (ESTELA closes the door, locks it. The WOMEN begin working; machines roar.)

ANA. Shit! I wish we had a fan here. (*ANA turns on the radio.*)

ESTELA. I don't want the dresses getting dirty with the dust. (*Lights fade.*)

SCENE FIVE: LATER THE SAME DAY. LATE AFTERNOON

AT RISE: Lights come on. The WOMEN are busy working. ANA goes to the bathroom. She sits on the toilet and starts writing in her journal. Spotlight on ANA.

ANA. It feels just as bad as when I was doing the fries at McDonald's. Pouring frozen sticks of potatoes into boiling lard and the steam hitting my face for \$3.35 an hour... This place stinks! I hate going to the store and having to climb over the winos, and ignore the catcalls of the sexist dope addicts and the smell of urine and marijuana on the street, and... I went to the store today and I saw an old friend. She's pregnant, again. She says she's happy and she doesn't care if she's on welfare. When she was still in high school she told me she knew I was going to do something with my life. I don't want her to know I work here.

(*Lights come back on. The WOMEN shift in their chairs, uncomfortable with the heat in their buttocks. ROSALI fans herself and notices that CARMEN has an odd facial expression.*)

ROSALI. Doña Carmen, why do you have that strange look on your face?

CARMEN. I reached over to get the next dress and I felt something moving inside. I think I'm pregnant.



PANCHA. Don't say that, Doña Carmen, or I'll lose faith in God. You're almost 50 and already have eight children, I'm barely 32 and can't have any.

CARMEN. Isn't that odd, I'm suppose to be an abuelita by now. Pero no puede ser, it can't be.

ESTELA. Amá, don't tell me you still have sex? At your age and in your physical condition?

ANA. Cállense, I heard something on the news about a raid. (*The WOMEN listen to the radio.*)

RADIO (*voice-over*). KNXW News all the time...The time now is 2:35 p.m. Twenty illegal aliens were captured today at the Goodnight pillow factory...

PANCHA. That's only a few blocks away!

RADIO (*voice-over*). The INS was given a tip by anonymous sources yesterday of the factory's illegal hiring of aliens. The owner was fined up to 2,000 dollars per alien... (*PANCHA, CARMEN, and ROSALI do the sign of the holy cross.*)

CARMEN. Estela, why don't you call the Glitz company and ask them, no, demand that they pay you for the past order of dresses. Even if they were late, they still have to pay us. You have to get the money. (*The radio is still on.*)

ESTELA. I don't want to be too pushy. They're the only company that has been willing to give us a contract.

CARMEN. Then do it for Pancha and Rosalí. You haven't paid them and las pobrecitas can't even buy groceries.

ROSALI (*lying*). I'm all right, don't worry about me.

ANA. Well, I'm not. Estela, just call. (*ESTELA thinks about it, then she decides to do it.*)

ESTELA. Here I go. (*ANA turns off the radio. ESTELA dials the number on the phone and waits.*)

PANCHA. ¿Sabes qué? My neighbor who works at the Del Monte canning factory is missing. I have a feeling they deported her. I'm so scared that I'll be waiting for the bus one day and they'll take me.

CARMEN. But you're legal.

PANCHA (*realizing*). Ayy, I keep forgetting.

ESTELA. Hello...Can I speak to Mrs. Glitz?...Hello, this is Estela. Estela Garcia...No, but we're almost finished...I know we agreed that you would pay



me for the last two weeks this Friday, but I was wondering, maybe, if it isn't too much trouble, if I could get an advance check... today... I know... I know... You're right, Mrs. Glitz... Ah... But my workers... I know, but I've got a lawyer working on that... I'll get it to you by next week... No, I mean it this time. Next week... Okay, Mrs. Glitz... I'm sorry... Yes, I'll see you on Friday. (*ESTELA hangs up. Her face expresses worry and fear.*)

CARMEN. ¿Qué te dijo la vieja?

PANCHA. What did she tell you?

ESTELA. She asked about my proof of employment papers again. Then she warned me that if la migra shuts us down, she won't pay us for all the work we've done.

CARMEN. ¡Mendiga vieja!

ANA. Do you think she would really do that? (*CARMEN and ESTELA talk among themselves.*)

ESTELA. Amá, why is this happening to me? I'm going to get deported, aren't I, Amá?

CARMEN. Mira, supposing you do get deported, we'll get a coyote to smuggle you back in. Somehow we'll find the money.

ESTELA. But I would have let you and everybody down. I'll lose everything that I've worked for, the factory, and my self-respect. And I don't know if I can start again.

CARMEN. Estela, your Apá was thrown back to Mexico four times, but he kept coming back. If you did it once, you can do it again.

ESTELA. I hope so. (*ESTELA pulls herself together and continues working. She picks up a bundle of sewn skirts and looks at them. She discovers that they have been sewn wrong.*) Pancha, do you realize you sewed all of the size 3/4 skirts backwards?

PANCHA. I did? No, I didn't!

ESTELA. Look! This is the outside of the material and this is the inside. Have you been doing all the lots this way?

PANCHA. I think so.

ESTELA. ¡Ay, no! More repairs! Pancha, please do them again.

PANCHA. No! It's so hot. I don't even feel like working. How do you expect us to work with this heat?



ESTELA. Pancha, I'll help you take them apart.

ANA. Couldn't you open the door?

ESTELA. No!

PANCHA. I can't work like this.

ESTELA. We're going to have to. (PANCHA grabs the skirt and begins to take them apart. ESTELA is looking at another lot and discovers the stained dresses that CARMEN hid.) ¡Amá! What did I tell you about the mole?! (ESTELA shoves a dress in CARMEN's face.)

CARMEN. The stains are not so obvious. I was going to clean them, I swear. I didn't want you to see them and get worried.

ESTELA. It's going to be hell trying to take the stains out! (ESTELA catches ANA accidentally burning the tul.) Not so close! You're burning the tul! Pay close attention to your work or don't do it. Have you been burning it on the other dresses too?! (ESTELA quickly looks at the dresses on the racks and those that ANA has finished ironing.)

ANA. I thought if I did it this way it would be okay and save us time. I can't stand the heat and the steam.

ESTELA. Can't any of you do anything right? Do I have to do everything myself so that these dresses get finished? (PANCHA gets busy pulling on the two pieces of material on the skirt instead of cutting the sewn thread one stitch at a time.) Pancha, don't pull on them or you'll tear them. I said I was going to help you do the repairs.

PANCHA. I want to get out of here and go home.

ESTELA. You have to finish this work.

PANCHA. Not in this heat!

ANA. Estela, please open the door!

ESTELA. For the last time, I won't!

PANCHA. Then I'll open it. (PANCHA walks determinedly towards the door. ESTELA stands in her way.) We're all burning in here. I'm getting dizzy.

ESTELA. I'm sorry it's so hot, but the van may be out there and I don't want them to see anything.

PANCHA. It's so selfish of you to keep the door closed when we are all burning!



ESTELA. I'm burning too!

PANCHA. But you're the one with the criminal record! It's not fair that we are all paying for your fault. We are all legal now!

ESTELA. Then go! Open the door, then leave.

PANCHA. All right! I'll leave, but with my work. (PANCHA grabs the skirts, begins pulling on them, tearing the material.) Let's see what else I've done. (PANCHA continues tearing. ESTELA tries to stop her by holding PANCHA's hands. PANCHA and ESTELA begin to get physical, almost ready to strike each other. ROSALI quickly steps between them to prevent them from hitting each other.)

CARMEN. Estela, ¡párale!

ROSALI. ¡Basta! ¡No se peleén! (ROSALI faints and falls to the floor. ESTELA and PANCHA stop fighting.)

CARMEN. Rosalí!

ANA. Rosalí, are you all right?

CARMEN. What could be wrong with her?

PANCHA. It's this pinche heat! It's your fault, Estela. Here you have us all locked up! See what happened?!

ESTELA (shakes ROSALI, who does not respond). Rosalí, please wake up!

PANCHA. Let's take her to the hospital!

CARMEN. ¡¿Pero que locura?! The hospital is three blocks away. We can't carry her, la migra is going to see us.

PANCHA. Ayy si, ¿entonces qué quiere? You want her to die?

CARMEN. She's not going to die!

PANCHA. And how do you know?

CARMEN. Don't exaggerate! (While PANCHA and CARMEN argue, ANA thinks quickly of what to do. She searches around the bathroom for something. She finds ESTELA's perfume and grabs some tissue. ANA uses it to wake up ROSALI. ROSALI becomes conscious and PANCHA and CARMEN finally stop arguing.)

ROSALI. Ah...

PANCHA. Rosalí, you want to go to the hospital?



ROSALI. ¿Qué páso?

CARMEN. M'ija, you fainted.

ANA. Are you okay?

ROSALI. Sí...Sí...I'm okay.

PANCHA. I'm gonna take you home.

ROSALI. I'll just rest a little...I'll feel better...

PANCHA. You can't continue working like this. I'll take you home. It's no bother, because I'm going home myself. (CARMEN gets a glass of water and an aspirin.)

CARMEN. Pobrecita, here, drink this.

ESTELA. Rosalí, I'm sorry.

PANCHA (helps ROSALI up). Where's your bag? (ROSALI points to it. PANCHA gets the bag.) Let's go. (PANCHA leaves with ROSALI without hesitation or saying good-bye. ESTELA fights the urge to cry.)

ESTELA (to herself). I'm sorry, Rosalí.

CARMEN. Don't blame yourself. Something like this was going to happen.

ANA. Isn't Rosalí the only one who knows how to set up the over-lock machine? (ANA and CARMEN look at each other worried. ESTELA has an expression of hopelessness. Lights slowly fade out.)

END OF ACT ONE



REAL WOMEN HAVE CURVES

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE: WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9TH, ABOUT 8:15 A.M.

AT RISE: CARMEN and ESTELA are the only ones present, working silently. On the clock it is 8:15 a.m. On the calendar it is Wednesday, September 9, 1987.

CARMEN. I don't think Pancha's coming back.

ESTELA. She's only an hour late. Maybe she went to visit Rosalí at her house.

CARMEN. Pancha is never late. *(Footsteps are heard outside. Then the code knock is heard. ESTELA smiles and goes to open the doors.)*

ESTELA. See, Amá! I knew she would come. *(ESTELA rushes to open the door. ANA is at the door.)* Oh, it's just you.

(ANA quickly comes in carrying a brown paper bag with detergent which she puts on the table.)

ANA. ¡Miren! Come look out the window. There's this strange homeless person outside. *(They go look.)*

CARMEN. What's so strange about him?

ANA. I don't recognize him.

ESTELA. So?

ANA. I think he's just disguised. He doesn't look desperate enough.



CARMEN. I've never seen him before.

ANA. I think he's a spy?

ESTELA. A spy?

ANA. Look! There's Pancha!

ESTELA. God! Thank you! She's come back!

CARMEN. But look, he's talking to her and she's pointing this way! (They drop to the floor. A few seconds later they go back to looking.) I wonder what he's asking her?

ESTELA. I wonder what she's telling him?

ANA. ¡Aguas! Here she comes.

(They scatter. ANA takes out the stain remover from the bag. CARMEN goes back to sewing. The code knock is heard and ESTELA opens the door. PANCHA comes in.)

ESTELA. Pancha, what did the bum ask you?

PANCHA. The bum? Ooo. He asked me where your Tormento lives.

ANA. I guess he wasn't a spy after all.

PANCHA. ¡N'ombre! He's just another one of his vago friends.

CARMEN. ¡Bola de viejos cochinos! No good drug addicts!

ESTELA. Ya! Stop talking about him!

CARMEN. Are you defending him? After what he did?

ANA *(aside)*. Amá, Estela finally told you?

CARMEN. No. I'm trying to get it out of her.

ESTELA. Forget it! I'll never tell you what happened on the date.

ANA. Okay, Estela. Be like that. I'll never tell you anything either. *(ESTELA doesn't budge. ANA and CARMEN give up.)*

CARMEN. Panchita, we were afraid you wouldn't come back.

PANCHA. Why?

CARMEN. Well, after what happened yesterday.

PANCHA. I have to come to work even if I don't want to...I went to visit



Rosalí this morning.

ANA. How is she doing?

PANCHA. She's doing better.

ESTELA. Is there any chance of her coming back this week?

PANCHA. No se. She looks pale. This heat will be bad for her. I'm surprised I didn't faint myself.

ESTELA. Maybe I will get a fan.

PANCHA. Estela, what do you want me to work on?

ESTELA. I don't know how we are going to manage without her. Pancha, please finish the zippers that Rosalí was working on.

CARMEN. Estela, give me the manual for the over-lock machine. I'm going to try and set it up myself.

ESTELA. Allí esta en el cajon. We'll just have to go on without her. Ana, did you get the stain remover?

ANA. It's on the table. How many dresses need washing?

ESTELA. Twelve. I should put my mother to wash them, but since she'll be busy with the over-lock I guess I'll do them.

ANA. How many dresses have we finished?

ESTELA. They're on the racks. And there are a couple in that box that just need ironing.

ANA (*looking at the racks*). That's all?

ESTELA. I found ten dresses with the tul burnt in them. Those were almost finished, but now the tul has to be replaced.

ANA. I guess I'll do that.

ESTELA. Amá, can you stay late today?

CARMEN. Pues sí.

ESTELA. Ana, will you stay late too?

ANA. Stay late?...Sure. (*ANA irons a dress carefully and slowly. ESTELA observes ANA for a few seconds.*)

ESTELA. Ana, can you iron faster? Just make them look decent. (*ANA frowns*)



at her suggestion and looks to PANCHA who is attaching hanging strings on the dresses next to her.)

ANA (*to PANCHA*). It's not that I don't iron fast enough, it's that whenever I finish ironing a dress I stop for a minute to really look at it. I never realized just how much work, *puro lomo*, as my mother would say, went into making it. Then I imagine the dress at Bloomingdale's and I see a tall and skinny woman looking at it. She instantly gets it and with no second thoughts she says "charge it!" She doesn't think of the life of the dress before the rack, of the labor put into it. I shake the dress a little and try to forget it's not for me. I place a plastic bag over it then I put it on the rack and push it away. It happens to me with every dress.

PANCHA. What an imagination. So what are you gonna study when you go to college next year? Where are you going?

ANA. To New York University. I'm going to study writing.

CARMEN. Así es que you better be quiet, don't tell her any *chisme* or one day you're gonna read about it.

PANCHA. And you think you'll make it?

ANA. I think so.

PANCHA. Pos, I do think you're a bit *loquita*, but if that's what you need. I think you'll make it.

ANA. Gracias, Pancha. (*PANCHA smiles at ANA seeing her differently for the first time. Meanwhile, CARMEN is frustrated with the over-lock machine.*)

CARMEN. ¡Ayy no! ¡No puedo! I try and I try and I can't! ¡Esta cochinada no sirve!

ESTELA. But what can we do? Who else could do it? Can you do it, Pancha?

PANCHA. I don't know anything about those new machines.

ESTELA. Amá, give me the manual. (*ESTELA grabs the manual and begins to work on the machine. Talking to the machine:*) Please, *maquinita*. If you behave I'll put on you all the oil you want. *Maquinita*, if you love me, help me.

CARMEN (*touching her stomach*). Ana, come here, quick. Feel my stomach. (*ANA puts her hand over CARMEN's stomach.*) Can you feel the baby kicking?

ANA. No... Amá, are you sure you're pregnant?

CARMEN. I think so. Aver, Pancha, tell me if you feel anything.



PANCHA. I'm busy, Doña Carmen.

CARMEN. Just come quick, Panchita. Ana doesn't believe me. (*PANCHA gets up from her chair and goes over to CARMEN. She places her hand on CARMEN's stomach.*)

PANCHA. I don't feel anything. I think the heat is getting to you too.

CARMEN. ¿Cómo puede ser? I can feel it! (*PANCHA nods her head and walks away fanning herself. She heads to the bathroom.*)

ANA. How many months should you be pregnant by now? I haven't noticed you getting any bigger.

CARMEN. I don't know. I've always been fat. I haven't noticed either.

ANA. Have you the symptoms?

CARMEN. Not all of them, but I've been pregnant enough times to know.

ANA. Are you going to keep it?

CARMEN. What do you mean?

ANA. You don't have to have it.

CARMEN. Ana, I don't want to talk about this.

(*Spotlight on PANCHA. PANCHA stands on the toilet in front of the small window. She opens the window and bathes her face with the breeze. PANCHA begins to cry.*)

PANCHA. Que bonito viento. Wind, that's what I am. (*Touching her stomach.*) Empty, like an old rag... (*Praying.*) Diosito, why don't you make me a real woman? If I can't have children, why did you make me a woman? (*PANCHA wipes her tears.*)

(*Lights come on.*)

ESTELA (*talking to the machine*). Maquinita, I'm going to set you up even if it's the last thing I do in this country. (*She holds the manual and follows directions.*) All right. Five threads. They all start from their spools onto the holes, then straight down, into the loops. Then they turn, go in between more loops underneath, then they all go into their needles. Then the electricity comes on... (*She turns on the machine.*)...I insert a piece of material, step on the pedal and...Ta-da! A chain of interwoven threads! I did it!

CARMEN. You fixed it? ¿Pero cómo?

ESTELA. I persisted and I did it!



CARMEN. ¡Mira que inteligente!

ANA. That's great, Estela! Now we don't have to worry about it anymore. (*They hear footsteps outside. They instantly freeze and become silent. They look to each other then CARMEN, ANA, and PANCHA quickly go to their purses. Someone is heard outside, then letters are slipped in through the mail slot. The WOMEN relax.*) Just the mailman...

(*The WOMEN suddenly realize that it probably means bad news for ESTELA. ESTELA picks up an envelope and reads it. No one asks what it says out of respect for her, but they all know it's another letter from the lawyer. ESTELA opens it and is about to read it when they hear footsteps outside. They grab their "Temporary Employment" cards from their purses. ESTELA hides behind CARMEN. Then the code knock is heard. The WOMEN rush to the door. ESTELA opens the door and ROSALI is behind the bar door.*)

EVERYONE. What are you doing here?!

ESTELA. Aren't you suppose to be resting?

ROSALI. I was in bed and I kept imagining Estela getting deported. So I had to come back. I know how badly you must need the over-lock machine.

ESTELA. I fixed it!

ROSALI (*disappointed*). You did? Well, where are the zippers so I can get started now?

PANCHA. I finished all the zippers.

ROSALI. You did?

ESTELA. Rosalí, I'd rather you go back and get well.

ROSALI. No, Estela, I'm fine. I can help.

ESTELA. It's not worth it if we're fighting and getting sick because of this heat.

ROSALI. It wasn't just the heat...I hadn't eaten and that's why I fainted. I didn't want you to think it was your fault.

PANCHA. But why do you need to lose weight? 'Tas flaca. (*ROSALI smiles, but doesn't believe PANCHA.*)

CARMEN. Have you eaten already, you still look pale?

ROSALI. No, I'm not hungry, Doña Carmen.

CARMEN. But that's what you have been saying and look what happened. Come on, eat something.



ROSALI. I am not hungry.

ANA. Rosalí, you can't see yourself the way we see you and that's why you think you're fat.

CARMEN. Rosalí, you need to eat something.

ROSALI. I'm not hungry!

CARMEN. You need to eat something! (*ROSALI looks at each of them and finally reveals the truth.*)

ROSALI. I'm not hungry because I've been living on diet pills.

CARMEN. So that's the secret diet? Ayy, Rosalí, don't you know those cochinadas are no good?

ANA. They're real bad for you because I read they're addictive.

ROSALI. I know. When I fainted I saw my body lying there, I thought I was going to die. I couldn't feel my body. And I just kept seeing Estela being deported. Estela, I want to come back to work. This is more important to me than being a size seven.

ESTELA (*embraces ROSALI*). Gracias...Can you work late?

ROSALI. Claro.

ESTELA. And you too, Pancha?

PANCHA. Pos bueno.

CARMEN. Entonces todas a trabajar! (*The WOMEN go to their sewing stations. ESTELA takes out her notebook and dictates the work.*)

ESTELA. Amá, let Rosalí do the over-lock work, she's faster. I want you to do lots size two through six. Pancha, you do lots size seven through twelve. Ana, you know what to do. (*ESTELA takes control and the WOMEN are determined to finish. The machines roar like race cars taking off. Lights slowly fade.*)

SCENE TWO: THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10TH, ABOUT 2:00 A.M.

AT RISE: Lights come on. It is 2:00 a.m., and street sounds are heard outside. ROSALI looks around and then stares at her stomach.

ROSALI. Did you hear that?

ANA. No, what?



ROSALI. A stomach growling. Whose stomach was it?

ESTELA. I don't know, but I'm hungry.

ANA. Me too. Amá, is there any rice left?

ROSALI. Did you hear it again?

PANCHA. Rosalí, it's your panza.

ROSALI. Yeah, it's me! I haven't heard my stomach growling in so long.

ESTELA. What's there to eat?

CARMEN. I might have something in my purse. Why don't we make something?

PANCHA. All this noise is driving me crazy. I'm going deaf. (*PANCHA turns on the radio. CARMEN gets up, looks around the table then in the refrigerator. All the WOMEN search in their purses for food.*)

CARMEN. Aaaa, I found something. Tortillas and...the mole!

ALL. Not the mole!

PANCHA. I've got something. (*PANCHA takes out a large amount of food from her purse. The WOMEN are surprised with every item she takes out: a box of fried chicken, a hamburger, a bag of chips, a bag of cookies, and a Diet Coke.*) I'm on a diet!

CARMEN (*aside*). Se ve. (*On the radio a "cumbia" has just finished. Then a DISC JOCKEY with a very mellow voice comes on the air.*)

DISC JOCKEY (*voice-over*). It's 2:25 a.m. on an early Thursday morning...I'm falling asleep here to pay my bills. And if you're listening now, you probably are too. So this is for you night owls! The ones that do the night shifts no one wants to do! (*The song "Tequila" blasts on the radio. The WOMEN are so sleepy, they jump around to the music trying to awaken. They eat and shake at the same time. Lights slowly fade.*)

SCENE THREE: SAME DAY, ABOUT 2:00 P.M.

AT RISE: Lights come on. It is Thursday, September 10, 1987. On the clock it is 2 p.m. The WOMEN are wearing the same clothes as the day before. As usual, it is extremely hot.

CARMEN (*smelling her armpits*). Phueeehh! ¡Fuchi! I stink. Aquí huele a pura



cuchupeta y pedo. Phuehhh! Who farted?

ESTELA. Amá, it's probably you who did it. Like they say, the one who smells it first is the one who has it underneath her skirt.

ANA. ¡Que calor! It feels like we're in hell!

PANCHA. How many more dresses to finish, Estela?

ESTELA. Fifteen.

ROSALI. Only fifteen?!

CARMEN. Dios mio, ya mero acabamos.

ESTELA (*counting dresses on rack*). 184, 185, 186. No, we only need 14!

ANA. What a relief! We're almost finished. (*ANA decides to take off her blouse, leaving on her sweaty bra.*)

CARMEN (*shocked at ANA's actions*). Ana, what are you doing?!

ANA. All this steam has me sweating like a pig.

CARMEN. We're sweating too, but we don't go taking our clothes off!

ANA. So why don't you? We're all women. We all have the same.

CARMEN. Not really. You have bigger chichis.

ANA. And you have a bigger panza!

CARMEN. That's because I'm pregnant!

ESTELA. You mean we're definitely going to have another baby brat to take care of?

ANA. Amá, do you really want to have it?

PANCHA. Doña Carmen, give it to me if you don't want it.

CARMEN. I can't just get rid of it, either way...But I don't want to have it.

PANCHA. But you're lucky, Doña Carmen.

CARMEN. No. It seems all I do is have children. One after another. I'm tired of this! I can't have this baby. I'll die. Last time I was pregnant the doctor said I almost didn't make it.

ANA. Amá, I didn't know that happened.

CARMEN. Every time your Apá touches me, the next day I'm pregnant. When



he would leave me in Mexico to go to el norte, he would leave me pregnant so no man would look at me and desire me. I was very beautiful.

ANA. You still are, Amá.

CARMEN. I was always scared of him. And I let myself get fat after you were born hoping he would be disgusted by me and not touch me anymore.

ANA. Why didn't you just say "No"?

CARMEN. Because, M'ija, I was never taught how to say no.

PANCHA (*comes forward and confesses*). It's easy, Doña Carmen. You tell him "No!" and you get out from the bed.

ANA (*realizing what PANCHA is saying*). Pancha?

PANCHA. And then you take the blanket. (*ANA embraces PANCHA as the WOMEN laugh.*)

ANA (*to the WOMEN*). Aren't you hot in those clothes? I feel sticky. I'm going to take off my pants. (*ANA takes off her pants. She is left wearing her bra and panties.*)

CARMEN. Ana, aren't you embarrassed?

ANA. Why? You already think I'm fat.

CARMEN. You know, Ana, you're not bad looking. If you lost 20 pounds you would be very beautiful.

ANA. Story of my life...Go ahead. Pick on me.

CARMEN. Why don't you lose weight? Last time you lost weight you were so thin and beautiful.

ANA. I like myself. Why should I?

PANCHA. Doña Carmen, Ana is very pretty. She looks good the way she is.

ANA. Thank you, Pancha.

CARMEN. It's because she's young. At this age young girls should try to make themselves as attractive as possible.

ANA. Why? Why not always? You're overweight too.

CARMEN. But I'm already married.

ANA. Is that it? Make myself attractive so that I can catch a man?



ESTELA (*sarcastically*). Ana, listen to them, learn now, “or you’ll end up like Estela.”

ANA. Amá, I do want to lose weight. But part of me doesn’t because my weight says to everyone, “Fuck you!”

CARMEN. ¡Ave Maria Purissima!

ANA. It says, “How dare you try to define me and tell me what I have to be and look like!” So I keep it on. I don’t want to be a sex object.

ESTELA. Me neither.

CARMEN. ¡Otra!

ROSALI. What’s wrong with being a sex object? What’s wrong with wanting to be thin and sexy?

ESTELA. Because I want to be taken seriously, to be considered a person... You know with Andrés, on our date...

CARMEN. ¡Aver cuentanos! What happened on that infamous date?

ESTELA. On our date I got all fixed up... Then he showed up with jeans and a t-shirt and he smelled like he had been drinking... He wanted to take me to the drive-in and when I asked, “Why the drive-in?” He said because there he could kiss me and give me what I wanted... He said, “I don’t care if you’re fat. I like you even better; more to grab.” That got me so angry! I thought he was interested in me because he was impressed that I owned this factory, my “intelligence,” that I... “I’m smart”... When am I going to meet that man who will see the real me?

CARMEN. So that’s what happened.

ROSALI. Pues if he has a brother, tell him about me. I think I’m going to die a virgin.

ANA. You’re still a virgin?! Dang!

PANCHA. ¿Pero tu Jaime? Nothing?

ROSALI. Nothing. I’ve felt fat ever since I can remember and I didn’t want anybody to touch me until I got thin.

ANA. Is that why you were starving yourself?

ROSALI. That’s part of it.

ESTELA. Rosalí, you’re not fat.



Photo by Ken Jacques, SD Rep

The women compare their stretch marks and are amazed by Carmen's (Lupe Ontiveros with her back to the camera) caesarian scar. Josefina Lopez, on the left, plays Ana in the San Diego Rep Production.

ROSALI. Of course I am. Look at my nalgas... And my hips! Paresen de elefante.

ANA. No they don't!

ROSALI. I look like a cow.

CARMEN. You look like a cow? Where does that leave us?

PANCHA. Rosalí, you're so skinny in comparison to all of us.

ROSALI. No I'm not. Here, look at my fat hips. *(ROSALI pulls down her pants and shows them her hips.)*

ESTELA. That's nothing. ¡Mira! *(ESTELA pulls down her pants and shows ROSALI her hips.)*

CARMEN (to ROSALI). At least you have a waist! *(CARMEN pulls down her skirt and shows ROSALI her stomach.)*

PANCHA. ¡Uuuu! That's nothing, Doña Carmen! *(PANCHA raises her skirt and shows them her stomach.)*



ROSALI. But you don't understand. I've got all these stretch marks on my arms... (*ROSALI opens her blouse and shows them the stretch marks close to her breasts.*)

ESTELA. They're small. I have stretch marks that run from my hips to my knees. (*ESTELA takes off her pants to show them.*)

CARMEN. Stretch marks?! Stretch marks!! You want to see stretch marks? (*CARMEN lifts her blouse and exposes her stretch marks and scars.*) Stretch marks!!! (*ANA sits back as she watches the WOMEN slowly undressing. They continue to compare body parts ad libbing. Finally they are all in their underwear and they stop to notice CARMEN's stretch marks.*)

ANA. Amá, what's that scar you have on your stomach?

CARMEN. This one? That was Estela.

ANA. It's such a big scar.

CARMEN. Estela was a big baby.

ESTELA. I gave you the most trouble, didn't I?

CARMEN. A-ha. But that's okay. I've heard Elizabeth Potaylor has one just like it.

PANCHA (*suddenly realizing*). Look how we are? What if somebody came in and saw us like this?

CARMEN (*fanning her breasts*). Pero que bien se siente. It feels so good to be rid of these clothes and let it all hang out.

ANA. Pues sí. Nobody is watching us. Who cares how we look.

ESTELA. So this is how we look without clothes?

CARMEN. Just as fat and beautiful... (*They all hug in a semi-circle laughing triumphantly.*)

ANA. We can finally relax.

ESTELA. We're not finished yet.

ROSALI. Estela, all we need are 14 dresses.

PANCHA. Those we can finish tomorrow for sure.

CARMEN. So what are we going to do to celebrate?

ESTELA. To celebrate what? Finishing on time for the first time?



PANCHA. No. All of us, most of us, finally being legal.

CARMEN. It's true. And once you get the card you can do anything you want. Tengo fe... Estela, I've been thinking... You know what we could do? We could copy the patterns for these dresses, make the dresses ourselves, and have a fashion show. Maybe we could model them ourselves. (*The WOMEN laugh at the thought.*)

ANA. No, that's a great idea! Why don't we make them in larger sizes too?

PANCHA. Está loquita, but sometimes she makes sense. We could probably sell more if we made them in larger sizes.

ROSALI. You know what we could also do? Jaime could sell them in the flea market. If they sell, little by little we could grow...

ESTELA (*jumping in*). And from there, if we make a lot of money, more money than what we're making now, maybe we can rent a place downtown on Broadway and start a boutique!!

ANA. But we'll need a name.

ROSALI. Well, why not just Estela Garcia?

ANA. I was thinking of something more French.

CARMEN. No. A French name would make it sound chafas. No, Estela Garcia sounds fine.

PANCHA. Estela, maybe you could go to school and study fashion design and design our dresses.

ESTELA. Yeah. I could do that. (*They all stop to imagine the possibilities.*)

CARMEN. So what are we doing to celebrate?

ESTELA. First let's finish, then we can talk about celebrating. (*They go back to work. CARMEN takes off her glasses as she fans her face.*)

CARMEN. Que calor. I'll be glad when all of this is over.

ANA. Estela, can we please open the door?

PANCHA. Open the door? ¿Pa qué? So people that pass by can see us like this?

ROSALI. But it's so hot!

ANA. I don't think they're coming. Besides we're almost finished. (*The WOMEN look to ESTELA for a decision.*)

ESTELA. Okay... Amá, open the door. (*CARMEN goes to open the door. She*



turns back to ESTELA as if to make sure. CARMEN opens the door and fans herself with it. Beat. CARMEN holds the door wide open and walks outside. The WOMEN can't believe their eyes. A few seconds later CARMEN runs back in screaming.)

CARMEN. Estela! It's out there! ¡La Migra! They're coming!! *(CARMEN shuts the door. All the WOMEN immediately get dressed.)*

ESTELA. No! It's not fair! We were almost finished!! *(The WOMEN dig into their purses for their cards. ESTELA can only cry in desperation. She cannot find her clothes and has to head for the door in her slip. ROSALI and ANA peek through the curtains and quickly make a realization.)*

ROSALI. Doña Carmen, that's not la migra!

ANA. It's the police!

CARMEN. The police? *(She peeks through the curtain.)* ¡¿Cómo?!

ANA. That's the guy I thought was a spy. He's an undercover cop!

ROSALI. Like in the movies.

ANA. It's a drug bust!

ESTELA. Where?

ROSALI. I think it's el Tormento's house. *(ESTELA moves for the door.)*

ANA. ¡Sí, el Tormento! They're taking him away. *(ESTELA and ANA jump up in excitement.)*

CARMEN. That's what he deserves! *(The police are heard driving away.)*

PANCHA. That's good they're taking him away in the van. ¡Bola de viejos cochinos! *(The WOMEN laugh together. Then ANA stops laughing.)*

ANA. Amá, was that the same van you saw Monday?

CARMEN *(nodding her head hesitantly)*. I think so.

ANA. On Tuesday?

CARMEN. I think so.

ANA. On Wednesday?

CARMEN *(sheepishly)*. Pos sí. *(She puts on her glasses.)*

ANA. Amá, that wasn't la migra. Everyone knows the vans are green!



CARMEN. I didn't.

ESTELA. How could you not know?

CARMEN. Pos no se; all those years of being undocumented I always imagined they were black.

PANCHA & ROSALI. Ayy, Doña Carmen!!!

CARMEN. Phueehhh! Tanto pedo y para nada.

ESTELA. Thank God! ¡Que susto!

CARMEN. It's time to retire! *(They laugh in relief then they become silent.)*

ANA. Well, it's over...for now. *(Beat.)*

ESTELA. If you want to take the rest of the day off... We'll finish tomorrow.

PANCHA. We can go?

ESTELA. Yes. I know how tired you must be. Go ahead. I'll stay and continue working.

ROSALI. I can't wait to go home and take a shower.

CARMEN. Si, porfavor, bañate... Tomorrow, I'm going to make a fresh batch of mole.

PANCHA *(scared for her life)*. Doña Carmen, why don't you make some rice? *(ANA, PANCHA, and ROSALI immediately run out.)*

CARMEN *(muttering to them)*. Ingrates! *(To ESTELA.)* Are you sure you won't need us anymore?

ESTELA. No. Now go! Before I change my mind. Don't you want to go outside? *(They gather their bags and quickly leave. ESTELA is left alone. Lights fade a little. She turns on the radio to a mellow jazz station. She goes around doing a final clean up, turning off lights and machines. She stops, recalling the five of them in their underwear, fantasizing about their own boutique. She grins to herself. She whispers.)* Large sizes? *(ESTELA shakes her head, dismissing the idea, but then stops and runs to a pile of stocked material. She eagerly searches and finds a roll of red fabric. ESTELA excitedly runs to a station and begins taking her measurements. As the lights slowly fade, we see ESTELA measuring herself with pride and pleasure, half laughing to herself, half defiantly...about to design and make her first dress. Lights slowly fade to black.)*



SCENE FOUR: FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11TH, ABOUT 2:25 P.M.

AT RISE: Lights come on. There are no more dresses on the racks. It is Friday, on the clock it is 2:25 p.m. ANA and PANCHA are busy blowing up balloons. ROSALI is cleaning up. There is a birthday cake with a large candle of the number "25." A large sign reads: "Happy Birthday Estela." Footsteps are heard outside. ANA runs to turn off the electricity, the WOMEN hide... The door opens.

WOMEN. Surprise!!!! (ROSALI takes a picture. CARMEN stands motionless holding a pot.)

ANA. Amá, we thought you were...

ROSALI. Doña Carmen, what's wrong?

CARMEN. I just got back from the doctor.

PANCHA. What did she tell you?

ANA. ¿Amá?

CARMEN. She says I'm not pregnant.

ANA. Then why are you sad?

CARMEN. She says, "it's only menopause." When you reach menopause it's over. You're no longer a woman. Se te seca allí abajo.

ANA. Amá, you are a real woman.

CARMEN. What I should be is a grandmother by now, but the way you and Estela are going, I won't be one for a long time...¿Y Estela?

ROSALI. She hasn't returned from delivering the dresses. She should be coming soon.

CARMEN. Here. (Gives ROSALI the pot.) I made rice.

(They hear footsteps outside. ANA turns off the lights. The door opens.)

WOMEN. Surprise!!! (ROSALI takes another picture. Lights come on. ESTELA stands shocked in her new dress.)

ESTELA. You remembered?

ROSALI (gives ESTELA a gift). Happy twenty-fifth birthday, you old maid!

CARMEN (referring to her dress). Estela, did you make it? Que bonita te ves, very nice. You see you're not ugly, you just didn't know how to dress.



ESTELA (*hugs ROSALI*). I brought a gift for all of you. (*ESTELA goes outside and brings in a large fan.*)

PANCHA. Now the boss treats us pretty good.

ESTELA. Because now I have money.

CARMEN. Did Mrs. Glitz finally pay you?

ESTELA. Yes, she paid me, but she kept threatening me... I've written out all the checks. (*ESTELA pulls out the checks from her bag. She distributes them, the first check going to PANCHA.*)

PANCHA (*looking at her check*). This is the biggest check I've ever gotten. (*ESTELA gives ROSALI her check.*)

ROSALI. Too bad I've already spent it on the Americana Express.

CARMEN. ¡Válgame! I didn't realize how much money you owed me.

ANA (*looks at her check, disappointed*). Estela, come here. (*ANA and ESTELA talk among themselves.*) Estela, how come I only get this much?

ESTELA. I took out for taxes.

ANA. Taxes? But you're not reporting...

CARMEN. How much do you have left?

ESTELA. About six hundred. I'll send the lawyer some more money today. Maybe they won't take me to court.

PANCHA. But if they deport you and take everything, we won't be able to work towards the boutique.

ROSALI. We're also going to have to look for another job. (*The WOMEN stare at the floor.*)

ANA. Back to McDonald's. (*Beat.*)

PANCHA. Estela, I know my husband isn't going to like it, but here. (*PANCHA extends her check to ESTELA.*) Take it. Pay me back when you can.

ESTELA. Pancha, are you sure?

PANCHA. No, pero, take it before I change my mind.

ESTELA. Muchas gracias... (*They try hugging, but they find it difficult, it's awkward. To herself*). Let's see. How much more do I need? (*CARMEN stares at her check for a few more seconds and slowly says good-bye to it.*)



CARMEN. Ten, ten. Take mine too. What kind of mother would I be if I didn't give it back?

ESTELA (*hugs CARMEN*). ¡Que buena es!

CARMEN. You see, ¿No que no te quiero? It's because I love you that I make your life so miserable.

ESTELA. Don't love me so much. (*ROSALI thinks about it too.*)

ROSALI. I guess the Americana Express can wait...Here is my check too. (*ESTELA hugs ROSALI. Now they all look to ANA. ANA holds her check tightly.*)

ANA. No, not me...I'm going to buy a typewriter...I can't. (*The WOMEN don't say anything, but continue staring at ANA.*) I really need this typewriter. I have this essay I have to type up for a contest...All right...Take half of it. (*ESTELA semi-hugs ANA.*)

ESTELA. Excuse me for just a minute. I have to make a phone call. (*ESTELA picks up the phone and dials.*) Hello...May I speak to Mrs. Glitz? This is Estela Garcia. I'm just calling to thank you for keeping your word and finally paying us today. I also wanted to tell you that you are a mean, wicked, bitter, unsympathetic, greedy, rude, awful...

ANA. Capitalist!

ESTELA. Capitalist!...No! We quit...Yeah, well I'll see you in hell. (*The WOMEN are shocked, incredulous of her actions.*)

CARMEN. ¡Maldita! What have you done?

PANCHA. You got us fired, didn't you?

ESTELA. No, we quit. (*ESTELA laughs excitedly.*)...Don't worry about the work. I got us a contract with Señor Vasquez!

EVERYONE. Señor Vasquez!!!

CARMEN. How did you convince him?

ESTELA. I just told him that we are the most hardworking women he could ever ask for. I know, I lied, but I got it.

EVERYONE. ¡Ayy! (*All the WOMEN embrace excitedly. ROSALI brings out the birthday cake. They sing "Happy Birthday" not realizing that ROSALI is holding the cake backwards and it reads 52 instead of 25. They stop halfway through and turn it.*)



ESTELA. Fifty two?! (*They continue singing.*)

ROSALI. Ana, light up the candle so I can take a picture... (*ANA lights up the candle.*) Okay, Estela, blow out the candle. (*ESTELA stops to make a wish then blows it out. ROSALI takes a picture of her.*)

ANA. What did you wish for?

ESTELA. Maybe when you get back from New York you'll see. (*ANA and PANCHA give their gift to ESTELA.*)

ROSALI. Ana, here, take a picture of us to remember this week... (*ROSALI gives ANA the camera. The WOMEN gather for the photo.*)

ANA. Okay! Ready?...One...two...three! (*The WOMEN suddenly hold up their "Temporary Residence Cards."*)

WOMEN. Green!!! (*The WOMEN freeze in a pool of light. ANA steps out and turns to the audience. The WOMEN exit backstage. Spotlight on ANA.*)

ANA. I always took their work for granted, to be simple and unimportant. I was not proud to be working there at the beginning. I was only glad to know that because I was educated, I wasn't going to end up like them. I was going to be better than them. And I wanted to show them how much smarter and liberated I was. I was going to teach them about the women's liberation movement, about sexual liberation and all the things a so-called educated American woman knows. But in their subtle ways they taught me about resistance. About a battle no one was fighting for them except themselves. About the loneliness of being women in a country that looks down on us for being mothers and submissive wives. With their work that seems simple and unimportant, they are fighting...Perhaps the greatest thing I learned from them is that women are powerful, especially when working together...As for me, well, I settled for a secondhand typewriter and I wrote an essay on my experience and I was awarded a fellowship. So I went to New York and was a starving writer for some time before I went to New York University. When I came back the plans for making the boutique were no longer a dream, but a reality. (*ANA picks up a beautiful designer jacket and puts it on.*) Because I now wear original designs from Estela Garcia's boutique, "Real Women Have Curves."

(The lights come on and all the WOMEN enter the door wearing new evening gowns and accessories designed by ESTELA. The WOMEN parade down the theater aisles voguing in a fashion-show style. They take their bows, continue voguing, and slowly exit. Lights slowly fade out.)

The End



REAL WOMEN HAVE CURVES

GLOSSARY SPANISH

A trabajar - To work it is

Abraza(r) - to hug

Abuelita - grandmother, granny

Adios - good-bye

Aguas - look out

Ahora si - okay, now

Alli esta en el cajon - It's there in the drawer

Amá - mama

¡Andenle! - Come on!

Apá - papa

Aqui huele a pura cuchupeta y a pedo - It smells like pussy and fart

Así es que - therefore/so

Asi hazlo - Do it this way

¡Ave Maria Purissima! - Oh holy Mary of God!

Aver - Let's see, to have

Aver cuentanos - Come on tell us

¡Aver dime, condenada! - Damn

you, tell me!

¡Ayy! - Ahh!, Oh!

¡Ayy que buenote! - He's so fine

bañate - take a shower

Barrio - neighborhood

Basta - enough

Besa(r) - to kiss

Blusas - blouses

Bola de viejos cochinos - bunch of dirty old men

Bueno - well, good

Buenos dias - good morning

Callense - be quiet

Chafas - tacky

Chicharron - pork rinds

Chichis - boobs, titties

Chisme - to gossip

Chismosa - gossip monger

Claro - of course

Cochinadas - junk

Como es - see how you are

¿Cómo estas? - How are you?

¿Como puede ser? - How can it be?

Corazón - heart

Coyote - someone who brings



people across the border illegally for a price	Estamos odidas - We are screwed
Cumbia - Latin music from the Caribbean	Fresas - strawberries, snooty upper class people in Mexico
¿de qué te apuras? - Why worry?	Gringa - Anglo-Saxon woman
Desgraciada - ungrateful	Hasta mañana - until tomorrow
Dios mio, ya mero acabamos - Oh, God, we're almost finished.	Hijole - short for son of a bitch
Diosito - God	¡Hora si que estamos bien jodidas! - Now we're really messed up!
Doña - a term of respect, literally meaning "old mother"; usually applied to the oldest woman present	Horita te lo coso - I'll sew it for you right now
¿Dónde los escondo? - Where shall I hide them?	Hoye - listen
¡Echame la culpa! - Blame me!	Huevona - lazy, good for nothing
El Tormento - the heartthrob, or "crush"; or tormentor	La migra - US Immigration and Naturalization Service officials, border patrol
Enojona - grouch	Las pobrecitas - the poor women
Entonces a la fuerza - then by force	Listos para chupar - delicious enough to suck
¿Entonces que quiere? - Then what do you want?	Lonchera - the lunch mobile
¡Entonces todas a trabajar! - Then to work it is!	Loquita - a little crazy
¡Esa perra! - That bitch!	Maldita - goddamned woman
Eso - that	Maquinita - little sewing machine
¡Esta cochinada no sirve! - This piece of junk doesn't work!	¡Mendiga vieja! - Damn witch!
Está loquita - she's a little crazy	¡Mentirosa! - Liars!
	Metiche - nosy
	Mi viejo - my husband, my old man
	M'ija - my daughter



Mira(r) - to look, Look!

Mira que inteligente - look how smart

Mira que parezco - see what I look like

¡Miren! - Look!

¡Miren cómo coquetea! - Look how she flirts!

Mole - a sauce made of chocolate and chili

Nada - nothing

Nalgas - buttocks

Ni lo mande dios - god forbid

No le da vergüenza - she's not ashamed

No mas mira que parezco - Just look what I look like

No mas ven a ver - Just come take a look

¡No puedo! - I can't

No que no te quiero - And you say I don't love you

No se - I don't know

¡No se peleen! - don't fight

No seas menta - don't be dumb

No seas terca - don't be stubborn

No te hagas de rogar - don't make us beg

No te va hacer daño - It won't do you any harm

N'ombre - no way

Nopal - cactus

¡Otra! - Another one!

¿Pa que? - For what?

Panza - stomach, belly

Panzonas - pregnant

Parele - stop it

Parsen de elefante - they look like they belong on an elephant

Patrona - boss

Pegame - hit me

Pero - but

¿Pero cómo? - But how?

Pero no puede ser - but it can't be

Pero que bien se siente - but it feels so good

Pero que locura - what insanity

Pero tu - but you

Pinche - damn

¡Pinche rata! - Damn rat!

Pobre - poor

Pobre mujer - poor woman

Pobrecita - poor baby

Por favor - please



Por fin - finally	Rapido - quickly
¿Pos cómo le hiciste? - Well, how did you do it?	¿Sabén qué? - You know what?
Pos no nos queda otra - well we have no choice	“Se prohíbe chismear!” - “Gossiping is Prohibited!”
Pos no se - Well, I don't know	Se te seca allí abajo - it gets dried down there
¿Pos qué paso? - Well, what happened?	Se ve - It shows
Pos yo ya no veo - I can't see a thing	Señor - mister, Mr., Sir
Pues - Well	Sí, ya se fue - Yes, he's already left.
Pues por que no - well why not	Tambien - also
Puro lomo - all back	Tan pequeña - so young
Que bonita, te ves - How pretty you look	Tanto pedo y para nada - all this fuss/worrying and for nothing
Que bonito - how pretty	‘Tas flaca - You're skinny
Que bonito viento - what beautiful wind	Ten - Take it
¡Que buena es! - How good you are!	Tengo fe - I have faith
¡Que calor! - It's so hot!	Tulle – “tul”, a synthetic material used for petty coats
¿Qué hiciste? - What did you do?	Vago - loser, lazy, good for nothing
¿Que le pico? - What bit you?	Valgame - oh my
Que locura - What madness	Vamonos - let's go
Que metiches - how nosey	Vamos a estar como gallinas enjauladas - we're going to be like caged chickens
¿Qué páso? - What happened?	Vas a verlo - you'll see
¡Que susto! - What scare!	Venganse - Come you all
¿Que te dijo la vieja? - What did the old hag tell you?	



¿Verá que sí? - Isn't it true?

Y los... - And the...

¿Y por qué no me habias dicho? -
Why hadn't you told me?

¿Y tu? - And you?

Ya basta - enough already

Ya llego mi viejo - my husband is
here

¡Ya ni la friegas! - You blew it







SIMPLY MARIA OR THE AMERICAN DREAM

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

I had thought about committing suicide, but I knew I wanted to live. I just wanted so badly to get my parents' attention and for them to understand me. So I wrote a play! I wrote **SIMPLY MARIA OR THE AMERICAN DREAM** when I was 17.

I wrote this play because I had to. I was so angry at my father for his machismo and all of his affairs. I was so angry at my mother for allowing my father to disrespect her and for being so dependent on him. I wanted to go to college because I knew that would be the only way I could become economically independent and self-sufficient. However, because I was undocumented at that time I couldn't get financial aid and my parents didn't have any money to give me or lend me. They would just tell me it was going to be a waste of time anyway and I should just get married. It is painful to think about this period in my life because I was hurting, I was confused, and I was mad as hell.

Very early on in my life I learned to channel my anger into something positive. I remember wanting to scream back at my father when he was yelling about house chores not being done. I couldn't yell back at him and disrespect him but my throat hurt as I held back the scream. I quickly grabbed a pen and stabbed the paper with my words. I wrote viciously with rage and said all the things that were in my gut and heart that I couldn't say out loud. The next day I read the piece of paper and was very impressed with what I had written. Writing became a tool of empowerment.



I was a junior in high school and I didn't know what I was going to do with my life. I was so confused and I kept hearing three different voices. I thought I was going crazy. Nothing made sense. My parents would tell me to do one thing and then I would go to school and my teachers would tell me to reach for the stars. I was living in two different worlds that kept clashing. I wrote *Simply Maria* to make sense of all this confusion.

Also, I saw a play by Luis Valdez called "I Don't Have To Show You No Stinking Badges" that dealt with the racism in Hollywood. It opened my eyes and I realized that as a Latina studying theater at the Los Angeles County High School For The Arts I had no future. I could either change my last name to something Anglo or I could do something about it. I decided to start writing to create roles for Latinas and for myself.

I write to empower myself because I grew up feeling very helpless. I grew up feeling like my life as a Latina woman was not important. After I wrote *SIMPLY MARIA OR THE AMERICAN DREAM* and realized how important my experience is, that of a Mexican-American immigrant woman, I became the protagonist of all my plays and took charge of my life and went on to college. I had to drop out of college three times, but I eventually graduated May 27, 1993.

Josefina López

Los Angeles

April 5, 1996



SIMPLY MARIA OR THE AMERICAN DREAM

A ONE ACT PLAY

CHARACTERS

MARIA daughter of Carmen and Ricardo; an ambitious Latino with a wild imagination who wants to go to college

CARMEN Maria's mother; submissive and traditional

RICARDO Maria's father; a hard-working man, very macho and traditional

JOSE Maria's macho husband

GIRL 1, MARY Maria's angel and later her "American Self"

GIRL 2, MYTH Maria's angel and later her "Writer Self"

GIRL 3, MARIA 2 Maria's angel and later her "Mexican Self"

ENSEMBLE

PRIEST PERSON 1

CARMEN'S MOTHER VENDOR 1

WOMAN VENDOR 2

NARRATOR BAG LADY

IMMIGRANT 1 PROTESTER

IMMIGRANT 2 MAN 1

IMMIGRANT 3 DIRTY OLD MAN

IMMIGRANT 4 CHOLO 1

STATUE OF LIBERTY VALLEY GIRL 1

MEXICAN MAN VALLEY GIRL 2

MEXICAN WOMAN CHOLO 2

POSTMAN PERSON 2

PERSON 3 HEAD NURSE



PERSON 4	NURSE 2
ANGLO BUYER	NURSE 3
REFEREE	NURSE 4
ANNOUNCER	BAILIFF
FLOOR MANAGER	JUDGE
HUSBAND	PROSECUTER
WIFE	JUROR 1
SALESMAN	JUROR 2

SETTING

The play begins in a small village in Mexico; moves to downtown Los Angeles and then to East Los Angeles.

TIME: The play takes place over a period of years following the growth of Maria from birth to womanhood.

SCENE ONE

AT RISE: Dim lights slowly come on. RICARDO, a tall, dark, and handsome Mexican man enters. He tries to hide in the darkness of the night. He whistles carefully, trying to make it part of the noises of the night.

CARMEN (*from her balcony*). ¿Ricardo, eres tú?

RICARDO. Yes! Ready?

CARMEN. ¡Sí!

(CARMEN climbs down from her balcony, then runs to RICARDO, kissing and consuming him in her embrace.)

CARMEN. Where's the horse?

RICARDO. What horse?

CARMEN. The one we are going to elope on.

RICARDO. You didn't say to bring one. All we agreed on was that I would meet you here at midnight.

CARMEN. I would have thought that you would have thought to...



RICARDO. Shhh!!!! ¡Mira! *(He points to CARMEN's room.)*

CARMEN. ¡Ayyyy! ¡Mi madre!! Let's go! And on what are we going?

RICARDO. On this. *(He brings an old bike.)*

CARMEN. ¿¡Qué?! On that? No! How could you...? Everyone knows that when you elope, you elope on a horse. Not on a...Ricardo, you promised!

(Offstage CARMEN's MOTHER discovers her missing.)

MAMA. Carmencita! Carmen! She's gone!!!

CARMEN. Oh, no! Hurry! Let's go!

RICARDO *(hops on the bike)*. Carmen, hurry! Get on!

CARMEN. No! We don't fit!

MAMA. ¡M'ija! Where are you?

CARMEN. We better fit! *(She jumps on, and they take off. She falls off the bike, but quickly gets back on.)* Ricardo, marry me! *(Crickets are heard, lights fade.)*

SCENE TWO

AT RISE: Lights come on. THREE WOMEN enter a church with candles. A FOURTH WOMAN, much older, enters with a lighted candle and lights the other candles. The THREE WOMEN then transform into STATUES of saints in the church. The PRIEST comes downstage, waiting for a wedding to begin. CARMEN enters, pregnant.

PRIEST. Will he be here soon?

CARMEN. Soon, he promised.

PRIEST. I was suppose to start half an hour ago.

(A WOMAN enters with a note.)

WOMAN. Is there anyone here named Carmen?

CARMEN. Is it from Ricardo? *(The WOMAN does not know. CARMEN reads the letter.)* "I haven't been able to get a divorce. It's sometime soon, believe me... Just wait. I'm working hard so that I can save money to buy a little house or a ranch for the three of us. If you wait, good things will come." *(To PRIEST.)* There won't be a wedding today.

(CARMEN exits, crying, with PRIEST. The STATUES become WOMEN and



they all ad lib malicious gossip about the pregnant bride. The PRIEST enters and the WOMEN stop gossiping. CARMEN enters again. This time she is no longer pregnant, but is holding her baby.)

PRIEST. Will he be here?

(RICARDO enters.)

CARMEN. He is here.

PRIEST. Good. Now we can begin.

CARMEN *(to RICARDO)*. I thought you wouldn't show up. *(RICARDO shushes her. The PRIEST begins his speech which is more or less mumbled and not heard except for:)*

PRIEST. Do you, Carmen, accept Ricardo as your lawfully wedded husband?

CARMEN. I do.

PRIEST. Do you, Ricardo, accept Carmen as your lawfully wedded wife?

RICARDO *(hesitates)*. I do.

PRIEST. Under the Catholic church in the holy house of God, I pronounce you man and wife. *(The PRIEST takes the baby from CARMEN and sprinkles holy water on the baby.)* Under the Catholic church, in the holy house of God, this child shall be known as María.

(The PRIEST gives the baby to the OLD WOMAN. CARMEN, RICARDO, and PRIEST exit. The STATUES now transform into THREE ANGELIC GIRLS who begin to hum, then sing beautifully with only the word "María." The OLD WOMAN gives the baby to one of the GIRLS. They come center stage and deliver the following facing the audience.)

ALL. María

GIRL 1. As a girl you are to be:

GIRL 2. Nice,

GIRL 3. forgiving,

GIRL 1. considerate,

GIRL 2. obedient,

GIRL 3. gentle,

GIRL 1. hard-working,



RICARDO. Carmen, I must go.

CARMEN. Ricardo, don't go. Not after all I've waited.

RICARDO. I don't want to leave, but we need the money. There's no work here. I must go to el norte, so I can find work and send for you.

CARMEN. I don't want to be alone.

RICARDO. You have María. I'm going so that we can have the things we don't have.

CARMEN. I would prefer to have you than the things I don't have.

RICARDO. It's not just for the money, but for me. I want something else besides a life on this farm.

CARMEN. María will not see you.

RICARDO. She will, when I am on the other side. I will send for you, she will be very proud of me.

CARMEN. You promise?

RICARDO. I promise.

CARMEN. Well, then, I will wait. We will wait.

RICARDO. I will write. *(He kisses CARMEN on the forehead.)*

CARMEN. Ricardo, remember that I love you. *(RICARDO leaves.)* Don't forget to write! *(Lights slowly fade.)*

SCENE THREE

AT RISE: Spotlight on NARRATOR.

NARRATOR. Yes, write a lot. They will miss you...And all who are in search of opportunity go to the same place; America. And America belongs to all who are willing to risk.

(Lights come on. A giant sail enters the stage, brought on by some EUROPEAN IMMIGRANTS.)

IMMIGRANT 1. All for a dream.

IMMIGRANT 2. Ciao mia Italia!

IMMIGRANT 3. Auf wiederzein mein Deutschland!



IMMIGRANT 1. Au revoir ma France!

IMMIGRANT 2. Hello, America!

(In the background “America the Beautiful” starts playing. The STATUE OF LIBERTY enters.)

IMMIGRANT 3. The Lady!

IMMIGRANT 1. Up high in the sky...

IMMIGRANT 2. ...incapable of being brought down.

IMMIGRANT 3. And like her...

IMMIGRANT 1. ...we carry...

IMMIGRANTS 2 & 3. ...a similar torch.

ALL. A torch of hope.

STATUE OF LIBERTY. Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free...

(At the bottom of the STATUE OF LIBERTY appear THREE MEXICAN PEOPLE [RICARDO is one of them] trying to cross the border. They run around hiding, sneaking, and crawling, trying not to get spotted by the border patrol.)

RICARDO. ¡Venganse por aquí!

MEXICAN MAN. ¿Y ahora qué hacemos?

MEXICAN WOMAN. What do we do now?

MEXICAN MAN. ¡Vamonos por alla!

MEXICAN WOMAN. ¡Nos nortearon!

RICARDO. Let's go back. *(They hide behind the EUROPEAN IMMIGRANTS. The STATUE OF LIBERTY composes herself and continues.)*

STATUE OF LIBERTY. I give you life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, for the price of your heritage, your roots, your history, your family, your language... Conform, adapt, give up what is yours, and I will give you the opportunity to have what is mine.

MEXICAN MAN. Pues bueno, if we have to.

MEXICAN WOMAN. Sounds good.

IMMIGRANT 3. Look, fireworks!



RICARDO. ¡Lo hicimos!

(“America the Beautiful” becomes overwhelming, lights flash representing the fireworks. A few seconds later the same lights that adorn the celebration for the EUROPEAN IMMIGRANTS become the lights from the border patrol helicopters hunting the MEXICAN PEOPLE. Hound dogs are heard barking, and the MEXICAN PEOPLE scatter and try to hide.)

RICARDO. ¡La migra!

MEXICAN MAN. ¡Corranle! *(The EUROPEAN IMMIGRANTS and the STATUE OF LIBERTY all keep pointing at the MEXICAN PEOPLE so they can be caught. The STATUE OF LIBERTY uses her torch to light every place the MEXICAN PEOPLE run to hide. The MEXICAN PEOPLE run offstage, and with the sail tilted down, they charge after them. Lights fade.)*

SCENE FOUR

AT RISE: Spotlight on POSTMAN who throws in paper airplane.

POSTMAN. Air mail for Carmen García.

(CARMEN runs onstage and picks up the letter from the floor. She reads the letter out loud.)

CARMEN. “Mi Querida Carmen, how are you? How is María? I’ve sent you some more money. This is the last letter I write to you because I am now sending for you. I fixed my papers with the help of a friend, and I got an apartment where we can live. Tell María I love her, and to you I send all my love...” María!!... “Leave as soon as possible...” María, ¡ven aquí!

(MARIA enters.)

MARIA. Yes, Mamí.

CARMEN. María, get ready, we’re going.

MARIA. Going where?

CARMEN. To join your father in the city of the angels.

MARIA. Angels? *(MARIA puts on her coat for the journey. Lights fade.)*

SCENE FIVE

AT RISE: The following is the making of a city. Actors will work as an ensemble



to create many roles. It will be organized chaos. Noises of police and fire truck sirens, along with other common city noises are heard. The stage lights up with vendors selling on the streets and all sorts of unusual and not so unusual people found in downtown L.A. on Broadway Street. CARMEN and MARIA become engulfed in the scene, appalled to see what they have come to.

PERSON 1. Broadway! Downtown L.A.!

VENDOR 1. Cassettes, cartuchos, dos dolares!

MAN 1. Hey, you wanna buy a gold chain?

CARMEN. Perdone señora, could you tell me...

BAG LADY. Get out of my way!

PROTESTER. Homosexuality is wrong! No sex! ¡Se va acabar el mundo! The world is coming to and end! *(The PROTESTER comes between CARMEN and MARIA and separates them. MARIA becomes lost. CARMEN searches frantically for her.)*

CARMEN. María! María, where are you?!

MARIA *(crying)*. ¡Mamá, Mamí!

WOMAN 1. Buy this. Sombras para verte como una estrella de cine.

WOMAN 2. Hair brushes, all kinds, a dollar!

WOMAN 3. You want to buy a handbag?

WOMAN 1. ¡Aguas! Here comes the police! *(All the street VENDORS run away.)*

MAN 1. Jesus loves you! He died for our sins! *(MAN 1 hands CARMEN a pamphlet.)*

CARMEN. ¿Qué?

WOMAN 1. That RTD bus is always late!

DIRTY OLD MAN. Hey! Little girl! You want to get married? The world is coming to an end and you shouldn't die without having done it.

CARMEN. María, ¡¿dónde estás hija mia?!

CHOLO 1. East L.A.!

TWO VALLEY GIRLS. We love it!

CHOLO 2. Hey vato!



TWO VALLEY GIRLS. Party and let party!

CHOLO 2. ¡Hoye mi carnal!

PERSON 2. ¡Viva la huelga! Boycott grapes!

PERSON 3. Chicano Power!

TWO VALLEY GIRLS. We love it!

PERSON 3. Chicano Power!

TWO VALLEY GIRLS. We love it!

PERSON 4. A little culture for the gringitos.

ANGLO BUYER. ¿Cuanto? ¿Salsa? ¿Cervesa?

CARMEN. María!

(MARIA runs scared and bumps into CARMEN. They hug each other. RICARDO, dressed in a charro outfit enters and gives some yells as if ready to sing a corrido. All the chaos of the city stops, and all the city people recoil in fear. RICARDO becomes the hero rescuing CARMEN and MARIA from their nightmare.)

TWO VALLEY GIRLS. We love it!

CARMEN. ¡¡Ayy!! What a crazy city! It's so awful! People here are crazy! *(CARMEN is about to cry, she embraces RICARDO instead.)* But Ricardo, I'm so happy to be here.

MARIA *(trying to get his attention)*. An ugly man chased me!

RICARDO. But are you all right?

MARIA. Sí. Now that you are here.

RICARDO. Carmen, we are finally together like I promised.

CARMEN. Ricardo, where's our home?

RICARDO. Follow me. *(They exit. Lights fade.)*

SCENE SIX

AT RISE: Spotlight on NARRATOR.

NARRATOR: They are going home to the housing projects... Pico Aliso, Ramona Gardens, Estrada Courts. No one likes it there, but it's cheap, "Ta



barato.” (*Announcing.*) The little house in the ghetto.

(*Lights come back on to a small apartment where RICARDO, MARIA, and CARMEN enter.*)

RICARDO. Here we are.

CARMEN (*disappointed*). ¿Aquí?

RICARDO. Yes, I hope it’s all right. It’s only for now.

MARIA (*smiling*). I like it! Look, Mamí! There are swings and grass.

RICARDO. There are a lot of kids in the neighborhood who you can play with.

MARIA. Really, Papí? Would they want to play with me?

RICARDO. Sure. (*Noticing CARMEN’s displeasure.*) What’s wrong? You don’t like it?

CARMEN. Oh, no. I’m just tired from the trip.

RICARDO. How was the trip?

MARIA (*cutting in*). It was great!

CARMEN. Great? You threw up on me the whole way here.

MARIA. Except, I don’t understand why the bus never got off the ground. Where are the angels? And where are the clouds? And the gate? And the music...Like in the stories Mamí used to tell me. I thought we were going to heaven. I thought you had been called to heaven because you are an angel. Are you an angel, Papí?

RICARDO. Yes, I’m your angel always.

MARIA. So if this isn’t heaven and you’re an angel; what are we doing here?

RICARDO. María, I brought you here so that you can have a better life. It wasn’t easy for me to get here. One time I was hiding in a truck with a lot of other people for hours. The coyote had left us there until someone came with money to claim us. It was so hot and humid that we were sure we were going to die. But I told myself I was going to make it because I knew I had a daughter to live for. I did it for you. In los Estados Unidos I hear the education is great. You can take advantage of all the opportunities offered to you. You can work hard to be just as good as anybody. You can be anything you want to be! (*Pause.*) Carmen, let me show you the kitchen. (*CARMEN and RICARDO exit.*)

MARIA. Estados Unidos, I don’t even know you and I already love you!



You're too generous. Thank you. I'll work hard. I can be anything I want to be!
(*MARIA starts changing clothes and ends up wearing a casual shirt and pants when she finishes the following:*) Estados Unidos, I'm ready to play the game. I'm gonna show the boys in this neighborhood how to really play football!

(*MARIA makes some football moves. She then runs out. CARMEN enters. CARMEN shouts out through an imaginary window.*)

CARMEN (*angrily*). María, ¡ven aquí!

(*MARIA runs in.*)

MARIA. Yes, Mamí?

CARMEN. La Señora Martinez told me you were playing football with the boys.

MARIA. Yes, Mamí. I was.

CARMEN. I don't want you to be playing with the boys. It's not proper for a señorita.

MARIA. But I'm good at sports. I'm better than some of the boys.

CARMEN. It doesn't look right. ¿Qué van a decir?

(*In the background appear the THREE GIRLS who are only heard and seen by MARIA. They whisper to her.*)

GIRL 1. Never shame your society.

GIRL 2. Never,

GIRL 3. never,

All. never!!!

MARIA. But my Papí said...

CARMEN. You are not to play with boys. (*CARMEN exits.*)

MARIA. I don't understand. Papí tells me to compete, Mamí tells me it doesn't look right.

(*MARIA exits to her room. RICARDO enters.*)

RICARDO. María, come here.

(*MARIA comes out of her room.*)

RICARDO. Who were you walking home with?



MARIA. A friend.

RICARDO. A boyfriend?

MARIA. No, just a friend I have in my last class who lives close by.

RICARDO. I don't want you walking home with and talking to boys. Study!

MARIA (*dares to ask*). Papí, why?

RICARDO. You're thirteen and you are very naive about boys. The only thing on their mind is of no good for a proper girl. They tell girls that they are "special." Knowing that girls are stupid enough to believe it. Then they make pendejas out of them. They get them pregnant and what a shame it is for the parents.

MARIA. Papí, how do you know?

RICARDO. Go to your room!

(MARIA goes to her room. There, the THREE GIRLS appear again and whisper to MARIA.)

GIRL 1. Never shame your society!

GIRL 2. Never, *(GIRL 3 does not continue, but slowly walks away from the TWO GIRLS.)*

GIRL 1. never,

GIRL 1 & 2. never!!

(Spotlight on MARIA. MARIA goes to the mirror, GIRL 3 appears in the mirror. MARIA brushes her hair and so does GIRL 3. Then GIRL 3 begins to touch herself in intimate ways, discovering the changes through puberty, while MARIA remains still, not daring to touch herself. Finally, when MARIA does dare to touch herself, CARMEN comes into the room and catches her. Lights quickly come back on.)

CARMEN. María, what were you doing?

MARIA. Nothing.

CARMEN. María, were you...? *(Before MARIA can answer.)* It's a sin to do that. Good girls don't do that.

GIRL 3 *(goes behind MARIA. Whispers)*. Why? Why? Why?

MARIA. Why?

CARMEN *(shocked)*. Because it's dirty. Sex is dirty.



GIRL 3. Why is it dirty? What makes it dirty?

MARIA (*suppressing and ignoring GIRL 3*). I'm sorry I didn't know what I was doing.

CARMEN. María, I'm telling you for your own good. Women should be pure. Men don't marry women who aren't unless they have to. Quieren virgenes. It's best that way, if you save yourself for your own wedding night. Be submissive.

GIRL 3. Why? Why? Why?

MARIA. Yes, but...why?

CARMEN. That's the way it is. I know it's not fair, but women will always be different from men. Ni modo. (*CARMEN exits to kitchen.*)

MARIA & GIRL 3. I don't understand. Why must a woman be a virgin? Why is sex dirty?

(*GIRL 1 appears.*)

GIRL 1. María, stop questioning and just accept.

GIRL 3. No, María! God gave you a brain so you can think and question. Use it!

GIRL 1. But it is not up to us to decide what is right and wrong. Your parents know best, María. They love you and do things for you.

GIRL 3. María, they are not always right...

(*RICARDO enters, he is in the kitchen.*)

RICARDO (*interrupting the argument*). María! Come and help your mother with dinner right now!

MARIA. All right! (*She goes to the kitchen.*)

RICARDO. What do you do in there all that time?

MARIA. I was doing my homework.

RICARDO. It takes you all that time? (*He has the mail and pulls out a letter from the pile.*)

MARIA. Yes, I want my work to be perfect so that I can win an award...

RICARDO. All for an award? How about if I give you a trophy for washing the dishes when you are suppose to, and for doing the laundry right? (*He begins to read the letter. MARIA searches for her mail. She finds a letter, reads it, and becomes excited.*)



CARMEN (*to RICARDO*). Who's the letter from?

RICARDO. My cousin Pedro.

CARMEN. So what are you going to tell him?

RICARDO. The truth. I'm going to tell him his Martita did a pendejadita and is due in three months. (*To MARIA.*) What do I tell you?

CARMEN. ¡Que verguena!

RICARDO. ¡Tanto estudio y para nada! It's such a waste to educate women. How is all that education helping her now that she's pregnant and on welfare... What's that smell?! The tortillas are burning!!!

MARIA. ¡¡¡Ayyy!!!

CARMEN. When you get married what is your husband going to say?

MARIA. I'm sorry, I completely forgot.

CARMEN. You can't cook, you can't clean...

MARIA. I try to do all the chores you ask...

CARMEN. You can't do anything right. Not even the tortillas.

MARIA. I really try...

RICARDO. No Mexican man is going to marry a woman who can't cook.

CARMEN. You're almost eighteen. (*Looks to RICARDO.*) I married your father when I was eighteen and I already knew how to do everything.

MARIA. Mamá, Papá, there are more important things... (*MARIA holds the letter, but decides not to say anything.*) I just don't care for housework.

(*MARIA goes to her room. Spotlight on MARIA. She looks at the letter and GIRL 3 appears. They look at the letter and GIRL 3 reads.*)

GIRL 3. "Congratulations! You are eligible for a four-year scholarship...Please respond as soon as possible..." (*MARIA jumps up in excitement. She then gets her typewriter and begins to type her response. The typewriter is not working. She goes outside to look for her father. Lights fade.*)

SCENE SEVEN

AT RISE: RICARDO is in the kitchen reading the newspaper. MARIA brings the typewriter to the kitchen.



Photo by Hector Rodriguez

Maria is told by her parents they want her to be a secretary.

MARIA. Papá...¿Esta ocupado?

RICARDO. I'm reading the paper.

MARIA. Do you think...well...maybe when you have finished reading you can fix this for me? Here's the manual. *(MARIA shows it to him. He pretends to look, but cannot understand it because he cannot read.)*

RICARDO. Go get my toolbox. I'll do it my way.

(MARIA exits to get the toolbox. RICARDO checks the typewriter carefully. MARIA brings back the toolbox and looks attentively and also tries to think of a way to introduce the subject of college. GIRL 1 appears behind them.)

GIRL 1. There is no one who can take the place of my father, who loves me but cannot express it any other way. If I wasn't scared I would hold you. I love you, Papí.

(RICARDO finishes fixing the typewriter and hands it to MARIA. MARIA exits to her room to continue typing. CARMEN enters with a basket full of clean clothes.)

CARMEN. ¡Ayy, que floja! Ricardo, where's María?



RICARDO. She's in her room typing.

CARMEN. She was suppose to pick up the clothes. (*CARMEN goes to MARIA's room.*)

CARMEN. María, come help me fold the clothes!

MARIA. I'm busy.

CARMEN. Busy?! Busy?! Can't it wait? I have things to do too.

MARIA. All right. (*MARIA goes to the kitchen to help her with the clothes. They sit at the table with RICARDO. CARMEN and MARIA begin to fold clothes.*)

CARMEN. María, your birthday is almost here. Do you want me to make you a beautiful dress for your birthday? Maybe you can wear it for your graduation? Oh, our neighbor told me that her daughter Rosario is graduating from a good business school. She says she already has a good job lined up for her as a secretary that pays eight dollars an hour, fijate.

MARIA (*gets the hint*). Mamá, Papá. I don't want to be a secretary. (*Pause.*) I want to go to college.

RICARDO. What?

CARMEN. It's too expensive.

MARIA (*quickly*). I was awarded a big, four-year scholarship!

RICARDO. ¿Qué? College? Scholarship?

MARIA. I want to be educated. (*Courageously.*) I want to be an actress.

RICARDO. You want to go to college to study to be an actress?! ¿¡Estás loca?!

CARMEN. Are you crazy? You don't know what you want to do.

RICARDO. I didn't know you had to study to be a puta.

CARMEN. What have we done to make you want to leave us? We've tried to be good...

MARIA. Nothing. It's not you. I want to be something.

RICARDO. Why don't you just get married like most decent women and be a housewife?

CARMEN. That's something.

RICARDO. That's respectable.



MARIA. I don't understand what you are so afraid of...

RICARDO. I don't want you to forget you are Mexican. There are so many people where I work who deny they are Mexican. When their life gets better they stop being Mexican! To deny one's country is to deny one's past, one's parents. How ungrateful!

MARIA. But you said that with an education I could be just as good as anybody. And that's why you brought me to los Estados Unidos.

RICARDO. No. Get married!

MARIA. I will. But I want a career as well. Women can now do both.

RICARDO. Don't tell me about modern women. What kind of wife would that woman make if she's so busy with her career and can't tend to her house, children, and her husband?

MARIA. And that's all a woman is for? To have children? Clean a house? Tend to her husband like a slave and heat his tortillas?!

RICARDO. ¡Que atrevida! Why do you make it seem like it's some sort of a nightmare? (*Sarcastically.*) Women have always gotten married and they have survived.

MARIA. But surviving is not living.

CARMEN. María, listen to your father.

MARIA. Papá, I listened to you. That's why! You encouraged me when I was young, but now you tell me you can't. Why?

RICARDO. Because...you are a woman.

MARIA. That's not fair!

RICARDO. Get out of my face! (*MARIA runs to her room, crying.*)

CARMEN. Ricardo, why don't you even let her try, por favor?

(*RICARDO angrily leaves. CARMEN goes to Maria's room. Lights change to Maria's room.*)

CARMEN. María don't cry. Don't be angry at us either, and try to understand us. M'ija, we are doing this for your own good. We don't want you to get hurt. You want too much, that's not realistic. You are a Mexican woman and you can't change that. You are different from other women. Try to accept that. Women need to get married, they are no good without men.

MARIA. Mamá, I consider myself intelligent and ambitious, and what is that



worth if I am a woman? Nothing?

CARMEN. You are worth a lot to me. I can't wait for the day when I will see you in a beautiful white wedding dress walking down the aisle with a church full of people. That is the most important event in a woman's life.

MARIA. Mamá, we are in los Estados Unidos. Don't you realize you expect me to live in two worlds? How is it done? Can't things be different?

CARMEN. No se. That's the way your father is. Ni modo.

MARIA. ¿Ni modo? ¡Ni modo! Is that all you can say? Can't you do anything? *(Gives up and explodes at CARMEN.)* Ahhh! Get out! Get out!!! *(CARMEN leaves and MARIA continues to pound on her pillow with rage. MARIA slowly begins to fall asleep. Lights slowly fade.)*

SCENE EIGHT

AT RISE: GIRL 2, who will now portray "MYTH," appears. She wears a spring dress and looks virginal. She goes to MARIA.

MYTH *(shaking MARIA lightly)*. María, get up and come see.

MARIA. Who are you?

MYTH. I'm Myth. María, come see what can be.

MARIA. What do you mean? What's going on?

MYTH. María, you are dreaming the American dream. You can be anything you want to be. Follow me. *(The sound of a horse is heard.)*

MARIA. Is that a horse I'm hearing?

MYTH. See...

(A PRINCE appears and he and MYTH dance to a sweet melody. Just as they are about to kiss, the fierce sound of a whip accompanied by loud and wild cries of a horse running off are heard.)

PRINCE *(in a very wimpy voice)*. My horse! My horse!!! *(He runs off to chase after his horse.)*

MARIA. What happened?

MYTH. I don't know.

(Another crack of the whip is heard, but now GIRL 3, who will portray "MARY,"



appears with the whip.)

MARY. Sorry to spoil the fairy tale, but Prince Charming was expected at the castle by Cinderella... Hello, María.

MARIA. And who are you?

MARY. My name is Mary. It's my turn now, so get lost, Myth! (*MARY snaps her fingers and a large crook pulls MYTH offstage.*)

MYTH. You're such a bitch!

MARY. Control, that's the thing to have. So come along and follow me!

MARIA. Where are you taking me to?

MARY. To liberation! Personal independence, economic independence, sexual independence. We are free. María, in America you can be anything you want to be. A lawyer. A doctor. An astronaut. An actress! The Mayor. Maybe even the President...of a company. You don't have to be obedient, submissive, gracious. You don't have to like dolls, dishes, cooking, children, and laundry. Enjoy life! Enjoy liberation! Enjoy sex! Be free!

(GIRL 1, who will now portray "MARIA 2," appears brandishing a broom.)

MARIA 2. You bad woman! You puta!

MARY. I'm not!

MARIA 2. You American demon. You are. You are. You just want to tempt her then hurt her! (*MARIA throws MARY the whip to defend herself.*)

MARIA. Mary, catch!

MARY. Thanks! Now we will see!

(MARIA 2 and MARY have a quick duel, until a MAN blows a whistle and becomes a REFEREE for a wrestling match. The REFEREE takes away the broom and the whip from the WOMEN.)

REFEREE. All right, c'mon girls. I want this to be a clean fight. (*The WOMEN push him away and charge at each other. MARY tries some dirty tricks.*) I told you I wanted this to be a clean fight. (*To MARY.*) What were you using?

MARY. Nothing. I'm so innocent.

REFEREE. Now come on over here and shake hands.

MARIA 2 (*asking the audience*). Should I? Should I? (*MARIA 2 gets MARY's hand and twists it. They wrestle wildly, with MARY winning, then MARIA 2.*



The REFEREE finally steps in and proclaims MARIA 2 the winner.)

REFEREE. Break! Break! *(He holds MARY and pulls her out.)*

MARY (barely able to speak). María, before you are a wife, before you are a mother, first you are a human being!! *(MARY is dragged out. MARIA 2, having won the fight, acknowledges the cheers of the crowd, then gestures for MARIA to kneel and pray. MARIA 2 puts a wedding veil on MARIA.)*

MARIA 2. A woman's only purpose in life is to serve three men. Her father, her husband, and her son...Her father...

(RICARDO enters, he picks up MARIA and escorts her to the church. The bells and the wedding march are heard. MARIA walks down the aisle. The groom enters.)

MARIA 2. Her husband...*(The couple kneels and a wedding lasso is put around them.)*

PRIEST. Dearly beloved, we are gathered here, under the Catholic church, in the holy house of God, to unite these two people in holy matrimony. Marriage is sacred. It is the unification of a man and a woman, their love and commitment, forever, and ever, and ever, no matter what! Well, then let's begin...María, do you accept José Juan Gonzalez García López as your lawfully wedded husband to love cherish, serve, cook for, clean for, sacrifice for, have his children, keep house, love him, even if he beats you, commits adultery, gets drunk, rapes you, lawfully, denies your identity, money, and in return ask for nothing? *(MARIA thinks about it and then turns to her parents who mouth to her "I do.")*

MARIA. I do.

PRIEST. Very good. Now, José. Do you accept María García Gonzalez López as your lawfully wedded wife to support?

JOSE. Simón, que yes.

PRIEST. Good. Well, if there is anyone present who is opposed to the union of these two people, speak now, or forever hold your truth. *(RICARDO stands up, takes out a gun, and brandishes it to the audience.)* Do you have the ring? *(JOSE takes out a golden dog collar. The PRIEST gives it his blessings.)* 5, 6, 7, 8. By the power vested in me, under the Catholic church, in the holy house of God, I pronounce you man and wife. *(The THREE GIRLS take away MARIA's veil and bouquet. They place the dog collar around MARIA's neck. Then they get the wedding lasso and tie it around her to make the collar seem and work like a leash. PRIEST speaks to JOSE.)* You may pet the bride. *(The lasso is given to JOSE. He pulls MARIA, who gets on her hands and knees. They walk down the*



aisle like dog and master. The wedding march plays, people begin to leave. Lights fade out.)

SCENE NINE

AT RISE: A table and two chairs are center stage. MARIA, pregnant, walks uncomfortably in. She turns on the television, then the ensemble creates the television setting, playing roles of t.v. producer, director, make-up people, technicians, as if the actual studio is there. Brief dialogue is improvised to establish on-set frenzy.

ANNOUNCER. And here is another chapter of your afternoon soap opera, “Happily Ever After.” Our sultry Eliza Vasquez decides to leave Devero in search of freedom!

FLOOR MAN. Okay everyone, tape rolling, stand by in 10 seconds. 5, 4, 3, 2, (Cue).

ACTRESS. Devero, I’m leaving you.

ACTOR. Eliza, why?

ACTRESS. I don’t love you anymore. Actually, I never did.

ACTOR. Eliza, but I love you.

ACTRESS. I faked it, all of it. I did it because I had to. But now I must go and be free! (MARIA claps loudly in excitement for her.)

FLOOR MANAGER. Cut! (To MARIA.) What are you doing here?

MARIA. This is my living room.

FLOOR MANAGER. Oh, sure it is. Well, go into the kitchen, make yourself a snack, we’ll have the carpet cleaned for you in about an hour. (Pushes MARIA aside.) I know, I’m sorry...Stand by. 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

ACTRESS. ...But now I must go and be free!

ACTOR. You can’t do this to me!

ACTRESS. Oh, yes I can!

ACTOR. But I’ve given you everything!

ACTRESS. Everything but an identity! Well, Devero, Devero, Devero. I’ve discovered I no longer need you. There are unfulfilled dreams I must pursue. I want adventure.



FLOOR MANAGER. And...cut! That's a take. Roll commercial. 5 seconds. 4, 3, 2, 1.

(The soap opera ends. MARIA claps approvingly. A commercial quickly begins, with the ensemble creating a similar on-set frenzy. In the commercial a MAN comes home with a can of Ajax as a gift for his WIFE.)

HUSBAND. Honey, I'm home! I brought you something. *(He hides the can of Ajax treating it as if he had flowers.)*

WIFE. Hi, darling! *(They give each other a peck on the mouth from a distance.)*
How was work?

HUSBAND. Fine...Ta-dah! *(Presents the can.)*

WIFE. You shouldn't have. Oh, thank you! I need all the cleaning power I can get!

HUSBAND. I can smell you've been cleaning.

WIFE. Yes! I've mopped the floors, did the dishes, the laundry, this house is spotless.

HUSBAND. What a wife! *(They give each other another peck on the mouth from a distance.)* You're a good wife!

(The doorbell rings. MARIA turns off the television. She goes to answer the door. It's her HUSBAND, he comes in and sits at the table.)

JOSE. María! María! I'm home. I'm hungry.

MARIA. José, how was work? Dinner is ready. I made your favorite dish. Do you want to eat now? *(JOSE doesn't answer.)* Well, I'll serve you then. *(MARIA walks off to the kitchen. She returns with a plate. She places it on the table.)* My mother came to visit today and she asked me what we are going to name the baby. She thought it would be nice to call her Esperanza.

JOSE *(with a smirk on his face)*. ¿Qué?

MARIA. Of course it isn't going to be a girl. It's going to be a boy, and we'll name him after you. That would be nice, wouldn't it? *(MARIA feels pains.)*
¡Ayyy! How it hurts. I hope after the baby is born, I will be better. I've been getting so many pains, and I have a lot of stretch marks...I know you don't like me to ask you for money, but I need the money to buy a dress that fits me. I have nothing I can wear anymore.

JOSE *(eats a spoonful)*. My dinner is cold.



Photo by Hector Rodriguez

Maria gives birth to six babies all at once

MARIA. Oh, is it cold? I'll heat it up right now. It will only take a minute.
(MARIA runs to the kitchen. JOSE leaves the table and stares at the bed.)

JOSE. María, ¡mi amor! Come here, baby!...Come on, m'ijita. I won't hurt you.
(JOSE gets on top of the bed. MARIA returns from the kitchen and sees him.)

MARIA. Jose, I don't feel so good.

JOSE. Oh, you'll feel fine in a second. (He continues to persuade her. Eventually he gets his way. Then, MARIA gives out a loud scream of pain.) What is it?

MARIA. The baby! (Lights fade out.)

SCENE TEN

AT RISE: Lights come on. MARIA goes into labor. JOSE walks her to the hospital. MARIA sits down and spreads her legs wide open. She is covered with a white sheet. THREE NURSES run in. A SALESMAN in a plaid jacket also enters.

SALESMAN. Here we have it. Direct from Mexico. The "Reproducing



Machine.” You can have one by calling our toll-free number. Get your pencil. It’s 1-800-AJUJ-AAAA!

HEAD NURSE. Now, relax. Just breathe like this. (*Exemplifies.*) Ahh!!! All in good rhythm. Good! Don’t worry, millions of women have Mexican children, especially Mexican women, they have millions. But you’ll get use to it. After your fourth child they’ll just slide right on out.

MARIA. ¡¡Amá!! ¡¡Mamá!!

HEAD NURSE. There’s nothing she can do. She went through it herself. Now, isn’t that pain great? You’re giving birth! Why it’s the most satisfying feeling a woman can feel. Okay, I think it’s coming! Push, push, push! (*A baby pops up, flying into the air. It is caught by one of the NURSES. She presents it to the HEAD NURSE.*)

HEAD NURSE (*disappointed*). Oh, it’s a girl.

NURSE 2 (*presents the baby to JOSE*). Here’s your baby daughter.

JOSE. A daughter? (*To MARIA.*) How could you do this to me? I’ll have to call her “Sacrifice.”

MARIA (*screams again*). There’s another one inside; I can feel it!

HEAD NURSE. Nahhh! Well, I’ll check just in case. (*The HEAD NURSE peeps inside the sheet.*) Well. I’ll be! Yeah, there’s another one. Push! Push! Push! (*Another baby pops into the air. The baby falls to the floor and NURSE 3 chases after it and picks it up. She passes it on to NURSE 2. NURSE 2 presents the baby to JOSE.*)

NURSE 2. Here’s another lovely daughter.

JOSE. Another daughter?! I’ll have to call her “Abnegation.”

SALESMAN. Here we have it! The world renowned Reproducing machine! (*MARIA screams again.*)

HEAD NURSE. What is it?

MARIA. There’s another one!

SALESMAN. Ahh, but if you were watching earlier, you saw the other amazing function. It can also be used as a sex object.

HEAD NURSE. Push! Push! Push! (*Another baby pops up.*)

NURSE 1. I’ll get it! (*The baby lands someplace far.*)

SALESMAN. Yes siree! You can be the boss. It’s at your disposal and control.



Hours of pleasure. And if it ever does go out of control, a kick and a few punches will do the job, and it will be back to normal.

NURSE 2. Here's another one.

JOSE (*to MARIA*). Another girl? Why are you doing this to me? I'll call her "Obligation."

SALESMAN. It's made in Mexico. It's cheap! It cooks! It cleans! (*MARIA screams again.*)

HEAD NURSE. Push! Push! Push! (*Three babies pop up into the air. Some land in the audience. All the NURSES collect them.*)

SALESMAN. Its stretch marks can stretch all the way from here to Tijuana. Not even a Japanese model can beat this one.

NURSE 2 (*to JOSE*). Guess what?

JOSE. No, don't tell me; another girl?

NURSE 2. Surprise! Surprise! Surprise!

JOSE. Three girls?! I'll call them "Frustration," "Regret," and "Disappointment."

SALESMAN. It delivers up to twenty-one children. It feeds on beans, chile, and lies.

HEAD NURSE. Are there any more babies in that Mexican oven of yours?

MARIA. I don't think so.

HEAD NURSE. See you in nine months for your next Mexican litter.

SALESMAN. You can have your own reproducing machine! 1-800-AJU-AAAA! (*Blackout.*)

SCENE ELEVEN

AT RISE: Lights rise after a brief pause. On the stage is a table which serves as a crib for six crying babies. MARIA tries to quiet the babies by holding them each one at a time, then by the bunch. CARMEN, RICARDO, and JOSE enter. They stand behind her like demons.

JOSE. Shut those babies up!

CARMEN. You're a bad wife!

RICARDO. This house is a mess!



CARMEN. You can't cook, you can't clean!

RICARDO. Look at your children!

JOSE. Where's my dinner?

RICARDO. The dishes?

JOSE. My tortillas?

RICARDO. You're a bad wife!

CARMEN. I did it all my life!

JOSE. Bad wife!

MARIA. No! I'm not! I'm a good wife! I try. I really do! *(MARIA gets the laundry and begins to fold it quickly, but nicely and carefully. Suddenly, the clothes begin to take on a life of their own. There is a giant coat, and a pair of pants surrounding MARIA. They start pushing her around, then her wedding dress appears and heads for MARIA's neck. They wrestle on the ground.)*

CARMEN. Martyr! *(MARIA manages to get away, and runs upstage. As she is running, a giant tortilla with the Aztec Calendar emblem falls on her, smashing her to the ground.)*

MARIA. Help!

RICARDO. Martyr! *(MARIA manages to get out from under the giant tortilla. As she escapes, she is attacked by a storm of plates.)*

MARIA. Help!

RICARDO, CARMEN & JOSE. Martyr!!! Martyr!!! Martyr!!!

MARIA *(becomes uncontrollably angry)*. ¡Ya basta! Enough! Do you want your dishes cleaned? I've got the perfect solution for them. *(MARIA goes offstage into the kitchen and loud sounds of dishes being smashed are heard.)* Now you don't have to worry. I'll buy you a million paper plates! Ohhh!!!! And the tortillas, Mamá! I'm going to show you how they should be done. *(MARIA gets a bag of tortillas and begins tossing them into the audience like frisbees.)* Are these good enough? I hope so! I tried to get the top side cooked first; or was it last? Anyway, who cares! Here are the tortillas! *(She attacks her MOTHER with the tortillas.)* I hate doing the dishes! I hate doing the laundry! I hate cooking and cleaning! And I hate all housework because it offends me as a woman!!! *(There is a piercing moment of silence.)* That's right. I am a woman...a real woman of flesh and blood. This is not the life I want to live; I want more! And from now on I am directing my own life. Action!



(Lights come fully on. TWO GIRLS grab and pull MARIA harshly to take her to another place. The stage now becomes a courtroom. MARIA is seated next to the JUDGE. The courtroom is filled with people who create a lot of commotion. The JUDGE, the BAILIFF, and the PROSECUTOR enter.)

BAILIFF. Please rise, the honorable hang judge presiding.

JUDGE *(banging his gavel)*. Quiet in my courtroom! I am warning you, anyone who causes any such commotion like this again will be thrown out! Is that understood?! Let's begin!

BAILIFF. We are here today to give trial to María who is being accused by her husband of rebellion toward her implied duties of marriage.

JUDGE. How do you plead?

MARIA. Plead? Innocent! Guilty! I don't know!

JUDGE. Are you making a joke out of my question?

MARIA. No...sir.

JUDGE. It sounds to me like you wish to challenge these laws.

MARIA. I don't understand why I am on trial. What real laws have I broken?

JUROR 1. She knows what she's guilty of.

JUROR 2. She knows what laws not to break!

MARIA. Who are they?

BAILIFF. Your jury.

MARIA. But they are women, Mexican, traditional...They can't possibly be objective.

BAILIFF. They are a good jury.

MARIA. This is unjust! I must speak up to this...

BAILIFF. You have no voice.

MARIA. Where's my lawyer? I do get one, don't I? *(The courtroom fills with cruel laughter, which quickly stops.)*

JUDGE. No, you defend yourself.

MARIA. How do I defend myself when I can't speak?

JUDGE. Destiny, oh pity. Now let's begin. Mister Prosecutor, could you please



state the objectives of this trial?

PROSECUTOR (*to audience*). This trial is meant to help preserve the institution of marriage. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury...in this case ladies of the jury. A man's home is his castle where he has his foundation. It is the place where he comes home to his family, and becomes the king of his castle. But this poor man comes home one evening and finds his children unattended, his house a mess, his dinner unprepared, and his wife sitting back, watching soap operas!

MARIA. I object!

JUDGE. You have no voice.

MARIA. You said I was to defend myself.

JUDGE. Not now!

PROSECUTOR. What we are going to try to do is prove the guilt of this woman...

MARIA. I object!

JUDGE. Shut up!

MARIA. I won't!

JUDGE. Mister Prosecutor, call your first witness!

PROSECUTOR. I call Ricardo García to the witness stand.

(RICARDO takes the stand.)

PROSECUTOR. Tell us about your daughter.

RICARDO. She was very obedient when she was young, but when she came to the United States she began to think herself "American." ...She studied a lot, which is good, but she refused to do her chores because she thought herself above them.

PROSECUTOR. Could you please tell us what happened that evening your daughter rebelled?

RICARDO. I'd rather not...That evening María was hysterical. She threw dishes, tortillas, enchiladas...!

PROSECUTOR. Thank you, that will be all...My next witness will be Carmen García.

(CARMEN takes the stand.)



PROSECUTOR. Tell us about your daughter.

CARMEN. She's really a good girl. She's just too dramatic sometimes. She's such a dreamer, forgive her.

PROSECUTOR. Could you tell us what you saw that evening?

CARMEN. Well, she was a little upset, so she did a few things she didn't mean to do.

MARIA. No, Mamá! I meant it!

JUROR 1. She admits it!

JUROR 2. She's guilty!

BAILIFF. Guilty!

ALL. Guilty!

CARMEN. No, she's just unrealistic!

MARIA. I'm guilty then! *(The whole courtroom becomes chaotic. Everyone yells out "guilty." CARMEN becomes so sad she cries.)* Mamí, don't cry! *(Lights begin to fade.)*

SCENE TWELVE

AT RISE: The lights go on and off and everyone disappears. MARIA begins to regain consciousness and wakes up from her dream. She was awakened by CARMEN's actual crying, which continues and grows. MARIA gets up and listens to CARMEN and RICARDO arguing in the kitchen.

RICARDO. ¡Callate! Don't yell or María will hear you.

CARMEN. Then tell me, is it true what I am saying?

RICARDO. You're crazy! It wasn't me.

CARMEN. Con mis propios ojos, I saw you and la señora Martinez meet in the morning by the park. You have been taking her to work and who knows what! Tell me, is it true? Because if you don't I'm going to yell as loud as I can and let this whole neighborhood know what's going on.

RICARDO. Okay. It was me! ¿Estás contenta?

CARMEN. ¡¿Por qué?! Why do you do this to me? And with our neighbor? She lives right in front of us!



RICARDO. Look, every man sooner or later does it.

CARMEN. Do you think I don't know about all of your other affairs before la señora Martinez? She is not your first! I never said anything before because I was afraid you would send us back to Mexico. But now I don't care! You break it with that bitch or...I'll kill her and you. ¡Ayyy! Ricardo, I've endured so much for you. I knew you were no angel when we ran off together, but I thought you would change. You would change, because you loved me. I love you, Ricardo! But I can no longer go on living like this or I'll be betraying myself and I'll be betraying María. (*CARMEN runs offstage crying.*)

RICARDO. Carmen, ¡ven aquí! Carmen, wait!

(RICARDO goes after her. MARIA is in shock, not believing what she just heard. The THREE GIRLS enter. GIRL 3 hands MARIA a piece of paper and a pen. GIRL 1 gets MARIA's jacket. GIRL 2 gets MARIA's suitcase. MARIA sits at the kitchen table and begins to write. The THREE GIRLS stand behind her as she writes the following:)

MARIA. "Dear Mamá and Papá. Last night I heard everything. Now I know that your idea of life is not for me—so I'm leaving. I want to create a world of my own. One that combines the best of me. I won't forget the values of my roots, but I want to get the best of this land of opportunities. I am going to college—and I will struggle to do something with my life. You taught me everything I needed to know. Good-bye."

GIRL 1. Los quiero mucho, nunca los olvidare.

GIRL 2. Mexico is in my blood...

GIRL 3. ...and America is in my heart.

MARIA. "Adiós." (*MARIA finishes the letter. She gets up and picks up her suitcase. The THREE GIRLS stand behind her and she puts on the jacket. The THREE GIRLS create the image of wings in flight. The THREE GIRLS leave through the door. MARIA follows them and before she leaves she stops and looks back, then exits.*)

The End



SIMPLY MARIA OR THE AMERICAN DREAM

GLOSSARY SPANISH

Adiós - goodbye

¡Aguas! - Watch out! / Look out!

¡¡Amá!! - Mom!!

¿Aquí? - here

¡¡Ayy!! - Oh!!

¡Ayy, que floja! - Oh, how lazy you are!

¡Ayyy, mi madre! - Oh, it's my mother!

¡Callate! - Shut up!

cartuchos, dos dolares - cassettes, two dollars!

charro - Mexican cowboy

chile - hot peppers

Con mis propios ojos - With my own eyes

¡Corranle! - Run! Get away!

corrido - Mexican ballad that tells a story

¿Cuanto? ¿Salsa? ¿Cervesa? - How much? Salsa? Beer?

¿Dónde estás hija mia?! - My daughter where are you?

el norte - the north, U.S.A.

Esperanza - Hope

¿Estás contenta? - Are you happy now?

¡¿Estas loca?! - Are you crazy?

figate - look

gringitos - Anglos

¡Hoye mi carnal! - Hey, homeboy!

¡La migra! - the border patrol

la Señora - Mrs.

¡Lo hicimos! - We did it!

Los quiero mucho, nunca los olvidare - I love you very much, I will never forget you.

Mamá - mother

Mamí - mommy

¡mi amor! - my love

Mi querida - My dear

¡M'ija! - My daughter!

¡Mira! - Look!

moral - a traditional Mexican bag made of cloth

Ni modo - Nothing can be done about it.

No se - I don't know.

¡Nos nortearon! - they confused us, lost us

Papá - father

Papá, ¿Esta ocupado? - Father, are you busy?

Pendejadita - stupid mistake

Perdone señora - Excuse me, lady

Por favor - please

¡¿Por qué?! - Why?!

Pues bueno - well, all right

puta - whore



¿Qué? - What?

¡Que atrevida! - How dare you!

¿Que van a decir? - What are they going to say?

¡Que vergüenza! - How embarrassing!

quieren vírgenes - they want virgins

¿Ricardo, eres tú? - Ricardo, is that you?

¡Se va acabar el mundo! - The world is coming to an end!

Señora - Mrs.

señorita - a young lady

¡Sí! - Yes!

Simon, que - Yeah, sure

Sombras para verte como una estrella

de cine. Eye shadows to make you look like a movie star.

‘Ta barato - It’s cheap

¡Tanto estudio y para nada! - All that education and for nothing.

¡Vamonos por alla! - Let’s go that way!

vato - Home boy / guy

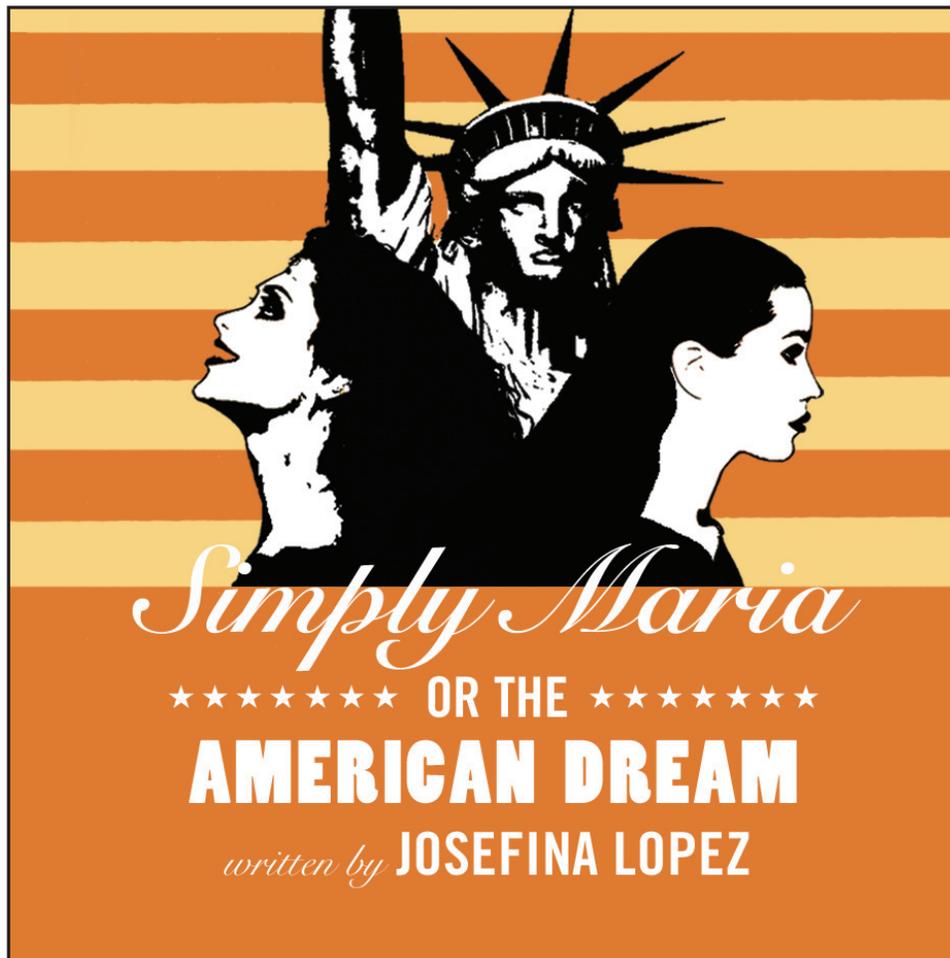
¡ven aquí! - come here

¡Venganse por aquí! - Come this way!

¡Viva la huelga! - Long live the boycott!

¿Y ahora qué hacemos? - What do we do now?

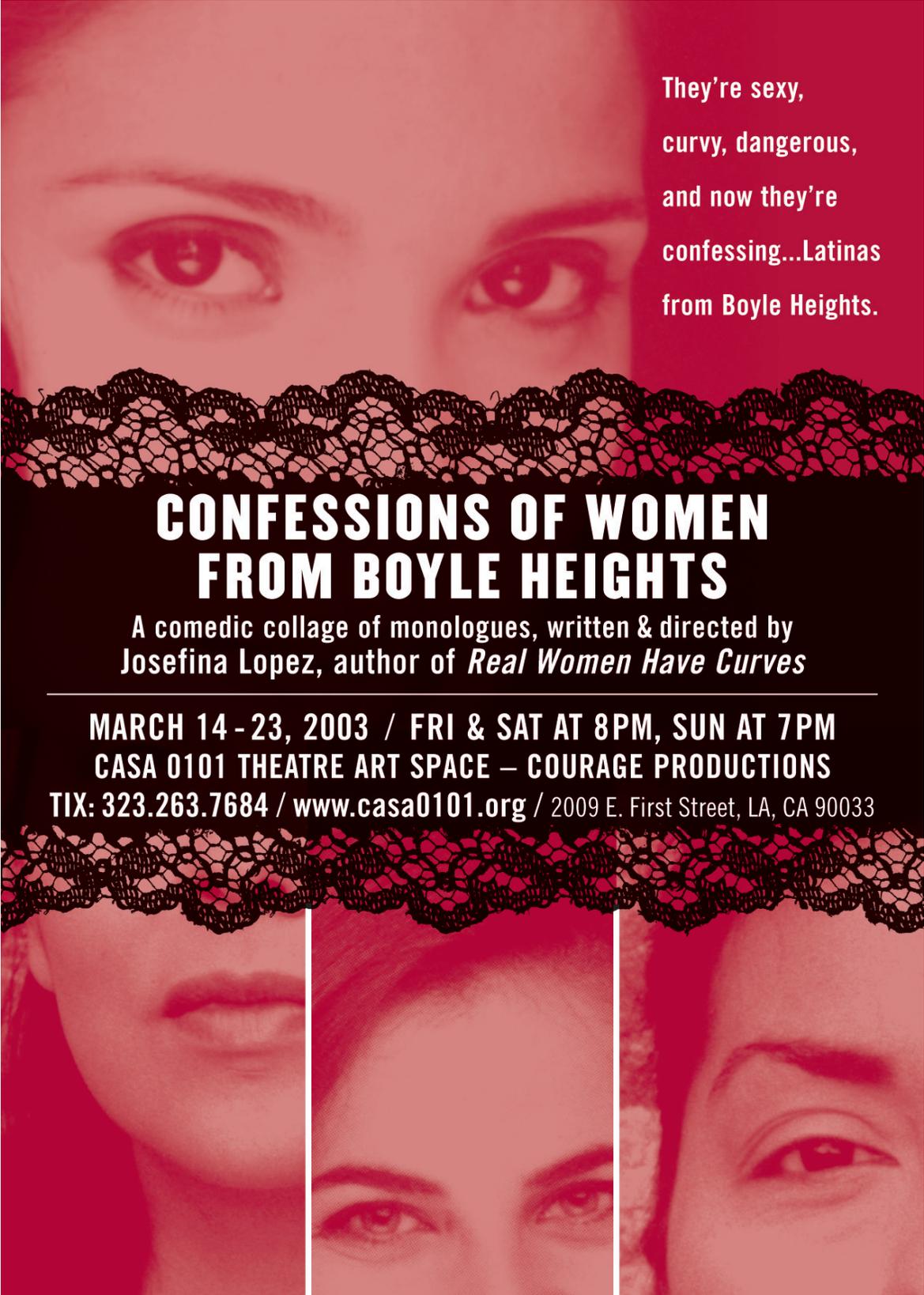
¡Ya basta! - Enough!



Artwork by Gab Lopez @ soapdesign.com



They're sexy,
curvy, dangerous,
and now they're
confessing...Latinas
from Boyle Heights.



CONFESSIONS OF WOMEN FROM BOYLE HEIGHTS

A comedic collage of monologues, written & directed by
Josefina Lopez, author of *Real Women Have Curves*

MARCH 14 - 23, 2003 / FRI & SAT AT 8PM, SUN AT 7PM
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Artwork by Gab Lopez @ soapdesign.com



CONFESSIONS OF WOMEN FROM EAST L.A.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

Latina women have always been categorized and portrayed as “virgins, mothers, and whores” in plays, movies, and television. I don’t like that because I am none of them. I am a combination of all of them. I have a little of the mother, the virgin, and the whore. However, Latinas are much more than that. Latinas are complex, diverse and powerful. All these women that I have written about are me and my mother. They all represent a certain confession at a different stage in my life and her life. When you put them all together you will get to understand the Latina that I am.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'J' and 'L' that are connected and overlapping.

Josefina López
Los Angeles



CONFESSIONS OF WOMEN FROM EAST L.A.

A ONE ACT COMEDY

SETTING

Various places in East Los Angeles and Little Tokyo.

TIME: The present.

The stage is bare except for an altar C with four candles and several items. The altar is mobile with several compartments and will become an intricate part of the show. There are also four coat racks on four opposite corners of the stage with several costumes. On top of the coat racks are the names of famous streets in East Los Angeles such as: Cesar Chavez Boulevard, Whittier Boulevard, First Street, Soto Street, Indiana Street, Fourth Street and St. Louise Street. Next to the racks are four chairs.

CHARACTERS

MARQUEZ-BERNSTEIN Ph.D. 35, an energetic Latina feminist who encourages Latinas to marry Jewish men in her “How To Be A Super Latina” seminar.

DOÑA CONSEPCION 55, a widowed grandmother. After her hus-



band's death, she is forced to come to terms with her homosexuality when she discovers her husband has given her AIDS.

DOLORES "LOLITA" CORAZON 25, a "Hot Señorita" type who teases and punishes men with her powerful sexuality.

CALLETANA 40, a street vendor who sells corn on the cob on the street and challenges City Hall for her right to earn a living.

YOKO MARTINEZ 28, a Latina trying to pass for Japanese

ROXIE 30, a self-defense instructor

TIFFANY 20, a Valley Girl and Chicana activist. Accidentally attacks a man who was merely going to ask her for the time.

DOÑA FLORINDA 45, a soap opera addict in recovery. Finds courage and strength in Frida Kahlo's paintings.

VALENTINA 26, a Chicana activist. She is trying to organize her people to fight against Proposition SB1070.

SETTINGS FOR THE MONOLOGUES

MARQUEZ-BERNSTEIN Ph.D. - A fancy hotel suite

DOÑA CONCEPCION - A church

LOLITA CORAZON - The pharmaceutical section in K-mart

CALLETANA - A street

YOKO MARTINEZ - A sushi restaurant in Little Tokyo

ROXIE - The Hollenbeck Police Station

TIFFANY - A Chicano Studies Class at East L.A. College

DOÑA FLORINDA - An apartment in a housing project

VALENTINA - Basement taco shop/hair salon by day and a revolutionary's secret gathering place by night

Lights fade out. After a few seconds lights fade in slightly. Four WOMEN enter from different directions. They are all wearing black. They gather at the altar and light up some sage which they pass around circling in the air, one by one. After they have finished, they push the altar U and transform it into a podium. Then three of the WOMEN sit on the chairs. One WOMAN exits.

The lights fade in completely and the three WOMEN become young, shy, Latina students waiting for a seminar to begin. A woman wearing a dressy blazer carrying a large designer bag rushes in as though she were late. She is VICTORIA MARQUEZ-BERNSTEIN, PH.D.)



MARQUEZ-BERNSTEIN, PH.D. ¡Hola muchachas! Bien-venidas! Welcome to my seminar. How have you liked the “The High School Latina Leadership Conference” so far? Pretty informative? Eye-opening? Shocking? Well, just get ready to change your lives! Oh, it’s nice to see that all of you were able to join me this evening. First of all let me introduce myself. My name is Doctora Victoria Marquez-Bernstein, Ph.D.

STUDENT #1. A doctor?

MARQUEZ-BERNSTEIN, PH.D. No, I am not a medical doctor, my Ph.D. is in Social Psychology. That’s why I decided to teach this seminar, because I am a “Super Latina.” Check it out! (*MARQUEZ-BERNSTEIN pulls out a brown and lavender satin cape just like Superman’s. It bears the emblem “S L” on it. She puts it on and models it for them.*) You like it? You like it? My mother gave this to me after I got my Ph.D. That’s when I became a Super Latina... But for those of you who don’t know me, I’m a best-selling author of several self-help books written especially for the Latina of today, like you. I brought a few copies to show you and at the end of the seminar you may purchase them at a discount...All right pues. (*She picks up the books and shows them to her students.*) Now, my first book came out two years ago. “Ten Pendejadas Latinas Do To Mess Up Their Lives,” I’ve done practically all ten, but I’m still here. My next book “La Llorona Complex” deals with the victim persona Latinas adopt. And my mother’s favorite, “Latinas Who Don’t Complain Enough.” I’m also presently working on my second Ph.D. dissertation entitled: “Lorena Bobbitt, The Latina Revolution Begins: Volume One.” (*She puts the books aside and stands at the very front of the conference room.*) All right pues. I’d like to see by a show of hands, how many of you Latinas believe you can be a “Super Latina.” Aver, aver, everybody raise your hand or get out of my seminar because I don’t want you here just occupying space. I want you to participate. Don’t be shy. Oh, come on now, you’ve been taught all your life to be quiet, but today I want you to speak up. What you think matters. Shyness is a sin! (*STUDENT #2 does the sign of the cross.*)

All right, let me put it to you this way! How many of you would like to make \$30,000 dollars a year?...(*The three STUDENTS raise their hands.*)

Oh, put your hands down! That’s not good enough! (*The three STUDENTS lower their hands.*)

...How many of you would like to make \$70,000?...Oh, that’s not even close. How many of you would like to make \$120,000 a year? Okay, muchachas, all of you raise your hands! Because that’s how much money I make. And you see that Mercedes out there, that’s mine. So you see, instead of living for weekends waiting for your boyfriend to pick you in his Chevy, mi’jitas, go to college and you can pick him up in your Mercedes! (*She snaps her fingers.*) All



right pues. Oh, before we get started, I'm going to share a little secret with you that's gonna save you a life-time of grief. (*Whispering with a New York Jewish accent.*) Marry Jewish men. They're so giving, they work so hard that they'll do anything to please. And if you're into women, marry a Jew, that works too. But if anybody asks you where you heard it, you didn't hear it from me... All right pues. (*She lifts up her arm and points to the upper interior part of it.*) What do I have underneath here? Do all of you know what I have here? Well you should know. It's a Norplant contraceptive. Now, I'm not here promoting the Norplant, I just want you to take responsibility for your fertility. One of the 10 Pendejadas Latinas do to mess up their lives is get pregnant. So don't get pregnant, get a Norplant and you can give yourself five years to complete your education, child-free. You know what, boys/men are nothing but trouble, so if you can avoid them, do so. Learn how to masturbate. Empower yourself with the knowledge... (*All the STUDENTS become embarrassed.*)

Oh, I forgot, I'm not supposed to talk about masturbation. The people who hired me don't want me to mention or say the word masturbation. But if I'm going to talk about preparation, and determination, we should be able to talk about masturbation. But I understand so I won't talk about masturbation. (*Aside.*) Anybody interested in learning, meet me after the seminar. (*She opens her attache case and takes out a piece of paper.*) All right pues, I'm going to read you a poem from a graduate of my seminar. When I met her she had very little self-esteem, she didn't like herself. She was involved with a man who would abuse her. So after she took my seminar, she wrote this poem and sent it to me. It's called, very appropriately, "My Low Self-Esteem Days"...

"Si te quise fue porque I had low self-esteem.

If I swore I'd always be by your side,

Was because I had nothing better to do.

Si te dije you were a great lover,

Was because I had nothing to compare it to.

If I said you and me were meant to be,

Was because I thought I couldn't find any better.

Si te dije que te amaba con toda mi alma,

Was because I hadn't found myself.

If you think that now that time has passed,

And my low self-esteem days are gone,



That I'm a bitch, a whore, a liar.

Well then go ahead!

'Cause you ain't my master, my father, my hero, my lover...

Shit! I ain't even gonna bother...

To address your remarks.

Time has proved me stronger,

I don't need your approval any longer.

So today, I ain't even gonna bother...

To let you know how good it's been...

Without you"

(She takes a dramatic breath of fresh air and lets it go, however her enthusiasm is still there.)

If anybody would like a copy, I'll have them out at the end of the seminar... You know, I could have written this myself. My husband, Murray, as sweet as he was, he took off with the maid. She was a simple girl from Guatemala. Oh, that's the second *pendejada* Latinas and all women do is to take off with somebody else's husband and then they wonder how he could have left them. So why am I telling you this?... Well, before you can become a "Super Latina" there are a few things you need to know and accept... You see, my father died when I was twelve and although he worked very hard, he never saved any money. He left my mother with nothing but debts and six children and I swore that I would never be that helpless. And I swore that I would do everything in my power not to be like her. Even though I got what I wanted, it didn't guarantee me happiness... It's lonely at the top. But it's better to be lonely and successful than to be lonely and unsuccessful. Your career can't hug you back, but your career will never leave you, will never cheat on you, will never insult you, will never abuse you. Whatever you've invested in your career you will get back, but it will be lonely, because when you've chosen to follow your dreams, people will not be able to identify with you. People won't like you. Men won't like you because as soon as you start asserting yourself in life, pretty soon you're going to be telling him, "A little to the left, a little more to the right, I need some more cunnilingus before I can reach my plateau of excitement..." Oh, I forgot, I'm not supposed to talk about cunnilingus either. All right, fine, we won't talk about cunnilingus anymore. *(Aside.)* Look it up in the dictionary when you get home and you'll forever thank me... Know that the odds are against you, but your spirit has to be strong. Because people will always



question your right to get an education. People will assume that because your last name ends with “ez” as in (*She reads name tags.*) Martinez, Chavez, Sanchez, Lopez, and Ramirez, that you got into college or you got your position because of your last name. So you must know what you want and you must know without a doubt that you deserve it. That you deserve to be happy, that you deserve everything in the world. To have money, to have shelter, to have food. You deserve to have hope. I have hope that maybe one of you will not be the same after today. But if you haven’t learned anything, remember this. Choose to be the heroine of your life, because, Mijita, ain’t no man gonna rescue you. Because as Latinas we don’t get to play the role of “Cinderella” and “Snow White.” No. As Latinas all we get to play are the roles of virgin, mother, whore, and the pinchi maid. (*She changes gears and becomes energetic and animated once again.*) So stand up if you want to be a “Super Latina” and put on your cape. (*The THREE YOUNG STUDENTS get up and open their arms as though they were wings and follow MERCEDES-BERNSTEIN as she circles the stage.*)

(*Aside.*) Have your mother make you one or you can get one at K-mart for \$5.99 in the toy section...and follow me, my caped crusaders. Follow me as we take the first step of the beginning of the rest of your lives! (*She stops suddenly and faces them. The three STUDENTS smash into her. She adjusts herself and stands erect. Immediately the three STUDENTS imitate her heroic pose.*)

Now let’s go check out my Mercedes so you can decide what features you want when you get yours. ¡Vamonos! (*She charges out like “Superman” with her three STUDENTS, their arms stretched out like capes. Lights fade out.*)

(*Lights fade in. We are now in St. Mary’s Church. The podium has become an altar again. There are two chairs C facing opposite directions. One WOMAN sits on the chair facing U, her back is turned and she becomes a PRIEST. Two other WOMEN are on their knees praying next to their chairs. One WOMAN begins singing “Ave Maria” off key as the fourth WOMAN becomes: DOÑA CONSEPCION, wearing a black lace veil over her head.*)

DOÑA CONSEPCION (*with a raspy smoker’s voice*). Ya parole, Gorgoñia, ya ni la friegas. You sound like a broken record. (*The WOMAN stops singing and continues praying. DOÑA CONSEPCION walks up to the altar and says a short prayer silently and does the cross. She then walks over to the empty chair next to the PRIEST.*)

Forgive me, Padre, for I have sinned...It’s been 25 years since my last confession. My husband died a month ago and I feel so guilty because I’m happy he’s dead...He died of lung cancer. I would tell him to stop smoking or he was going to kill me too with secondhand smoke and de adrede he’d smoke some more...Padre, I feel so guilty, but for the first time I can go to



sleep without being woke up every 15 minutes by my husband's snoring... Padre, I feel so guilty, but for the first time I can have the TV and the remote control all to myself... Padre, I feel so... I miss him... Who's going to take out the garbage at night? Who's going to take the dogs to the park? Who's going to eat the leftovers?... He wasn't a bad husband, I don't want you to think that's why I'm happy... I don't want to imply that, because that would be a lie and at this age I've told too many lies... I loved him, as much as I could... He wasn't hard to love because he was handsome and a good father. I had eight children with him, and he took care of us well... I can't even say he was a borracho or anything bad like that aside from his smoking. He never hit me... He came close once when I forgot to mention how much chili powder I had accidentally put on his food and his tongue got irritated. Se enchilo tanto that he wanted to hit me. But aside from that he never raised his hand to me. He never said a mean word to me... Pues, now that I think about it, he never said that much to me... So how can I be happy he's dead? I don't want to be, but I am... I don't know how I can possibly be, but I am... Padre, are you listening? *(She looks closer, checking to see that there is a PADRE there listening. The PADRE is falling asleep.)*

...I went for a medical check-up to check my diabetes and that's how I found out I have AIDS. *(The PADRE moves his chair to give himself some distance just to be safe.)*

I know he gave it to me because I've never slept with anyone but him. I was a virgin when we got married and I never cheated on him... I'm not happy he's dead because he gave me AIDS... I don't want you to think that. I don't really blame him because I never liked sex. It was boring and sometimes painful and I hated getting pregnant. After my eighth child I didn't want to have sex with him anymore. So el pobrecito would have to go get it somewhere else. And I knew that, and I let him. I never said anything about it because what else could he do... Every time he made an attempt to caress me or kiss me I would be disgusted by it and I would push him away... I often wondered why he didn't just divorce me. I even told him to leave me if he wasn't happy. But he wouldn't. I guess I was a good mother and wife even though... It must have been very difficult for my children never to see their parents kissing or touching. I never did that, because... *(She pauses and can't go on... She looks up to God and around her.)* Padre, I've been gay all my life! *(The PADRE raises his hands up to God in disbelief.)*

So in a way I blame myself... I wish I didn't have to tell you this, Padre, but I can't tell anyone else, and my husband's death left me so broke I can't afford a therapist... Maybe I have to come out to you first because it was God who was there with me when I lost my virginity and felt nothing. I thought it was normal not feeling anything the first time, but later on in my marriage, having



sex with him seemed unnatural...It was also God who was with me when I had my first, how shall I say...“wet dream,” about being with a girl at the age of six. So I just want to tell you to tell God that I have finally accepted what he knew all along...*(She checks to see if the PADRE is listening.)* I also want to tell my children and grandchildren because the doctor told me I have two years to live and I want them to know. But I know this will tear them apart. My husband’s death has been hard on them...It’s been hard on me because I have to pretend I’m a suffering widow. I don’t want to pretend anymore. I cannot smile when I’m around them. I cannot enjoy anything when I’m around them and they never leave me alone! They’re always asking me how I’m doing? Sending flowers, greeting cards, men in gorilla outfits with balloons, bringing cakes, cleaning my house, doing my chores; all the things I wanted them to do when they were kids. But now, when I want to be left alone to gather my thoughts about what I’m going to do with my life, my children won’t leave me alone. They worry I’ll get depressed and die of depression in two years like most spouses who have been married for years and their spouse dies. So they keep bringing their kids over and we have lots of family dinners to keep “Nana” company. We have quality time, we communicate our love for each other, we share all the feelings that we couldn’t express when my husband was alive, and I just want to tell them to get the hell out of my house and leave me alone!...*(The PADRE grumbles.)*

See, that got your attention...Padre, how do I tell my children? I wish I could tell them...Do I tell them I’m gay and let them find out I have AIDS when my hair starts falling out, I’m losing weight, and I’m wearing adult Pampers before my time? Or do I tell them I have AIDS and they’ll feel so bad for me that they won’t mind I’m gay? Or should I even tell them at all? I can just let them believe I died of depression...I don’t have to tell them!...Oh, yes, I do...I never told my husband and I robbed him of his chance to find a woman who would satisfy him and make him feel wanted. I might have even saved his life. Maybe he wouldn’t have smoked so much if he didn’t feel so sexually frustrated and resentful of me...I killed him...

PADRE/PRAYING WOMEN *(shocked)*. You killed him?!

DOÑA CONSEPCION. I killed his spirit...I took away his happiness...*(She cries.)* I never wanted to hurt him. I never wanted to hurt anybody, but I’ve already hurt everybody by living this lie. The least I can do is hurt everybody with the truth. But how do I tell my grandchildren, “Nana’s gay and she’s got AIDS.” I feel so embarrassed for my family, because this isn’t supposed to happen. I’m not supposed to be gay, I’m not supposed to get AIDS, not at this age! Ask God why it happened to me, Padre. If it’s punishment, then I understand...If it’s a lesson...then I’m grateful because now I can’t hide what I’ve always been. I’ve got two years to live, I’ll at least die having found



myself. Even as I'm dying, I'm living every day the way I should have done all my life...I think I'll tell my children and my friends everything tonight. I hope they understand. Y si no. ¡Que se vullan a la chingada! This is my life... Thank you, Padre, thank you, God, thank you, God... Amen... (DOÑA CONSEPCION does the cross and gets up and walks out. Lights fade out.)

(Lights fade in. The altar is UL and has been transformed into a counter in the pharmacy section of K-mart. There is a little sign on the altar that reads: "PHARMACY." There are two chairs next to each other facing the audience. One WOMAN goes behind the altar and becomes the PHARMACIST. One WOMAN sits at a chair in her corner. One WOMAN enters: She is DOLORES CORAZON, a shy Latina wearing a plain pastel floral print. DOLORES walks up to the PHARMACY counter with a doctor's prescription and hands it to the PHARMACIST.)

DOLORES. Here's my prescription...My name is Dolores Corazón.

LOLITA (*offstage*). Her real name is Lolita.

DOLORES. How long is it going to take?

PHARMACIST. Fifteen minutes.

DOLORES. Fifteen minutes?!

LOLITA (*offstage*). Dang! (*The PHARMACIST leaves. DOLORES picks a box of female condoms.*)

DOLORES/LOLITA. Female condoms?...Female condoms.

(LOLITA "CHINGONA" CORAZON enters. She is flamboyant, a sexy Latina who is not afraid to express her opinions and doesn't need anybody's approval. She wears her hair high and loose. LOLITA snaps her fingers and DOLORES and the PHARMACIST freeze.)

LOLITA. Female condoms? Female Condoms! Tsss! The day I start wearing a female condom is the day the Equal Rights Amendment is passed; women are no longer raped and beaten up in this country; baby girls in China stop getting killed for being born female; brides in India stop being burned alive; women in Africa stop having their clitorises cut out; women in Brazil stop getting killed by jealous husbands who get away with it; and young women all over the world have equal opportunity to get an education and get fed properly. 'Til then, shit! The least men can do is wear a condom, know what I mean, prieta? (*She snaps her fingers and DOLORES and the PHARMACIST unfreeze.*)

K-MART ANNOUNCER (*voice-over*). Attention, K-mart shoppers, the wait is over! You can now apply for your own K-mart Credit Card. And as a Blue



Light Special bonus, if you apply within the next fifteen minutes you'll get a discount coupon for your next Lay-away. (*DOLORES walks over to a chair and she and LOLITA sit simultaneously.*)

LOLITA. Sure you do, that little bruise on your face didn't come from no bump. So put down those female condoms and get him some! The cheap kind. The ones that make his pito itch... Besides you only get three in a box for three times the amount for men's condoms. And they look "Uuugly"... But why am I complaining, I don't even use condoms... (*DOLORES looks around wondering if anybody else can hear LOLITA. LOLITA looks herself up and down realizing she looks like the biggest slut and should be using condoms.*) I don't need to... I know you think I'm a slut, I know you do so don't deny it... You're probably looking at me thinking that of all people here in K-mart, I should be counting the minutes before these fat, "Fiesta"--colored condoms become the next "Blue Light Special," right?... No, that's o-kay, people call me a slut... Now, do I look like a slut to you? Of course I do, I work at it. But you can be one or just look like one, but I ain't one. I'm a chingona! I like that better. Matter of fact, I don't know what a puta is, I don't think I've ever met one... Oh, yeah, wait, yeah, once. This one stupid chick who was having sex for all the wrong reasons. She was trying to keep her boyfriend from leaving her. She had no respect for herself. I, on the other hand, respect myself and I do what I do for all the right reasons. For fun. And I don't use condoms, 'cause I don't need any. I'm what some men call a "tease." And it don't bother me. I know men look at me and they go in their minds, "Yo, I bet she's easy." They put on their macho airs and they give me their packaged crap about how sexy I look and how I remind them of their sisters. Their sisters! These losers can't even come up with original lines. And they also tell me how they saw me in their dream the night before and it was destiny that we met and shit like that. Then they rub up against me, and if they don't already have a hard-on I give them one when I look at them and smile. I give them that idiotic look they love and make them think they're so clever and funny, so funny that I'm wet all over. They think I'm easy but what they don't know is that I'm hard. Harder to breaker, harder to dominate, harder than their dicks. (*LOLITA turns to DOLORES and gives her a serious look.*)

So, Prieta, let me ask you, why do you want to cheat on your boyfriend? Yeah, I know you do, so don't deny it. 'Cause otherwise you wouldn't be checking out the condoms if you were in a "happy monogamous relationship" like you claim to be... No, don't tell me, don't tell me... Your boyfriend promised you he would never raise a hand to you, he'd rather die than to do a thing like that again, right? But, mi'jita, he will. So now you're seeking the comfort of a stranger to caress those wounds, huh? Yeah, I know I'm good, I still could be a psychoanalyst if I wanted to, you know? But, mi'jita, when your boyfriend



finds out, he's gonna kick your ass... (*LOLITA waits for a response, then she enthusiastically proceeds to share her knowledge.*) Okay, pues! You're gonna need some tips on how to be a slut.

(*LOLITA snaps her fingers and lights fade. They are now in a discotheque. LOLITA leans against the bar, acting "cool," enjoying the music.*)

LOLITA. Okay, first thing, Prieta, make eye contact. Any guy you want, you can get. Look around. Pick one. Make eye contact. Stare a little longer than you should, then, turn away... You got him. Then the game begins. So have fun. Just don't touch... I usually don't pick up men. Unless I find one challenging enough, then maybe, maybe, I'll go with him to his apartment.

(*LOLITA snaps her fingers, lights change to an apartment setting. She does several seductive poses.*)

LOLITA. They kiss me and I let them play with my breasts. I whisper all the dirty things they want to hear. "Ayy, Papi, como me gustas. Ayy, que grandotote estas, chulo." And if they're gringos they go crazy for this one, "Eres mi rey. You are my king. Can I have a bite of your big and meaty burrito? Que rico, suave..." (*To the audience.*) Gerardo stole that line from me, all right... "¡Sabroso!" Then I get all hungry and want to leave to go buy some tacos, but I can't because they got me all wrapped up with their hands... Then when they get as hard as a brick and they're burning up inside, their pelvis' start trembling. My hand goes inside their pants. I barely touch it and they become little boys... And that's when the real acting begins. (*LOLITA puts up her hand to her forehead very dramatically like an innocent virgin in distress.*)

"Oh, no, I can't do this. I can't. I'm a virgin!... I have to go home," I tell them. They're so hard and excited, their faces turn yellow. The misery of ending up with blue balls hits them and they beg me to stay. "I can't. I shouldn't be doing this," I say with the voice of a total virgin. And they believe me and lower their expectations, 'cause they're so horny by now they'll settle for me pulling on their dicks. But I won't even do that, 'cause I'm a virgin. (*LOLITA laughs, indulging in the lie.*)

So I'm practically out the door and sure enough they're so pissed-off at me by now they accuse me of being "a tease." Then I stop and I look at them all sincere and shit. "I'm not a tease... Well, I can't have sex with you, but what if... What if... What if you masturbated for me. Oh, I bet you look so beautiful when you come." And the guys fall for it. Yeah! Yeah! They do! They're so horny they settle for masturbating for me. So I watch. They make these faces. I imagine kinda like the faces they would be making as they were being born. They look like children screaming for their lives. They look so vulnerable, so delicate, like I could take them into my arms and crush the life out of them...



Sometimes I touch their faces and hold them while they come. I watch their faces and I get more excited than if I were to have sex with them. *(She starts to make facial expressions. She looks excited but then she stops, frightened. She walks over to DOLORES who is now sitting and stands behind her as if whispering this story to her.)*

I remember the first time I had sex. I went with him to his apartment, I was so excited and scared. But when he stuck his hand in my panties and his finger entered me I told him, "Oh, no, I can't do this. I can't. I'm a virgin!" He kept pressing it in and he thought I was being a tease. He got on top of me, penetrated me, humped me. He made faces, like he enjoyed it even though I was screaming. I kept screaming because I felt like he was tearing me inside. With every scream and grimace I made, I got glimpses of his face. I couldn't understand his look. How could he look like an angel, happy and peaceful, when he was hurting me? *(DOLORES doesn't want to hear anymore so she runs away from LOLITA. Lights fade in. DOLORES and LOLITA sit across from each other simultaneously.)*

Yeah, I know not all men are assholes. I actually met a "redeemable male" a few months...I hate to admit it, but I love him. Why do you think I'm checking out the condom section? He's kinda nice, but I like him too much to seriously consider giving it up to him...No, not my virginity, some dickhead already took that...But I don't think I'm ready yet. It's tough to let a man see you lose control, and that's just one thing I gotta have...

PHARMACIST. Dolores Corazón, your prescription is ready.

DOLORES/LOLITA. That's me!

LOLITA. Good luck...I hope your boyfriend doesn't kick your ass, again. *(LOLITA gets up and leaves. DOLORES looks for LOLITA but can't see her anymore.)*

PHARMACIST *(voice-over)*. Second call for Dolores Corazón. *(DOLORES goes to the counter. LOLITA stands behind her. They both pick up the prescription simultaneously. Lights fade out.)*

(Lights fade in. One WOMAN goes to the altar and removes the "PHARMACY" sign. She takes the altar from the side and pushes it forward like a shopping cart. This woman becomes: CALLETANA "LA ELOTERA", a short, dark, very indigenous-looking woman with a long black braid. She is dressed plainly, wearing an apron, knee-highs, a colorful dress, pants, and a red baseball cap.)

CALLETANA. ¡Elotes! ¡Elotes! ¡A un dolar! Andele, seño, buy a corn. Ayy, what diet, for what? Your old man is fat too. Eat one and you'll feel much better. Anyway, who is going to want to steal your husband? He's fat and



bald... No, no, no. No mucho. Not a lot. Not enough for a pretty little girl in need of a green card to be repulsed, but enough to keep them away...Andele, compreme uno...A, bueno...How do you want it? With mayo and everything? (*CALLETANA starts preparing the corn first with lemon, mayo, then goat cheese, butter, chili powder. She gives the corn on the cob to a member of the audience and speaks to the audience.*)

I've worked here on this corner of the street for five years now. It's my anniversary and to celebrate it, I am having a special. Two corns for \$1.99. No, no, no mas 'stoy bromiando, just kidding. Ni me crea...I came from Mexico and I brought my three daughters with me because my husband, viejo rabo verde, left me for a tiny squincla mal pintada. A twenty-year-old mensa. And I came here and worked as a maid until I got tired of being treated like a slave... No, no. Now don't go thinking that I'm scared of hard work, because I'm not. By selling corn on the street I can provide for myself and my daughters. And the good thing about it is that I am the boss. I don't want nobody feeling sorry for me. Because if people do, I'd rather just shoot myself right now. Why be a burden on society? I don't like it when they say that Mexicans are lazy, because we are not. Prietos y sensillos tal vez, pero lazy no. Because we didn't cross a river and risk our lives to get here just to be tourists. We came here to work. N'ombre, I'm not scared of work, eso si que no. Cochina y mal hablada yes, pero lazy no. I used to have a grandmother who would wake up every morning at five a.m. to prepare the nixtamal and she would make the tortillas by hand like a real woman...¡Elotes, elotes, con mucho chile! (*She prepares another corn. Taking her time and doing it with a certain pleasure. She sings a love song in Spanish. A police squad car is heard in the distance.*)

What I didn't like when I first started was that I would be selling corn and the police would pass by and they would tell me it was illegal what I was doing. That they would have to arrest me. But because I reminded them of their mothers they wouldn't arrest me. So then I would move. But in a little while I'd come back. Every week they would do this and I just acted like a mensa and I'd tell them "Yes, mister! Okay, okay." Then they'd leave, but I'd always come back. One day, they finally caught me. And in front of everybody they put handcuffs on me and put me inside their police car...That was a very interesting night, my first time in jail. I spent it with the prostitutas. I learned a thing or two, that I can't mention in front of children, that might come in handy one of these days when I meet my galan de cine. (*She prepares a corn.*) Ah, you think because I'm old and my chichis almost touch the floor I don't get an itch down there once in a while. But like they say, mejor que la gosen los humanos a que se la coman los gusanos, eh? (*The corn on the cob all of a sudden becomes a phallic symbol. She continues singing the love song.*)

But the next day after they let me out of jail, I returned to my corner and



another vendor was there. Un viejo chancludo, peludo, a hairy man selling sour mangos. He stole my corner. And worst of all he kept coming on to me. A whole year at my corner and on my one-year anniversary they threw me in jail and I lost my corner. I liked that corner because it was close to a bar and when men got drunk they would buy their girlfriends a corn to impress them. And the prostitutas, when they were done for the night would be very hungry and would buy some corn. (*The other WOMEN take out a dollar from their brassiers and buy a corn from CALLETANA.*)

Pero gueno, so I left and I joined the tamale vendors at a church nearby. And one day this young woman, who called herself a Chicana, but I called her a cochina because she was dressed up like a hippie, started telling me about what was going on in City Hall and that if I was interested in telling my story to try to convince the politicians to legalize street selling. “No, no.” I told her. I didn’t want to go, pero mi hija, my twelve-year-old daughter, mi chatita, she gave me the saddest look when she asked me why they took me to jail. “What did I do wrong?” I told her “nothing,” but it got me angry that she doubted me. It broke my heart. And I started thinking to myself and asked myself, “What is my crime?” I have not robbed anyone. What is my crime; trying to survive? Why don’t they go arrest those welferosos who only sit on their ass, breeding, robbing the government. When I know I haven’t done anything wrong, I’m not scared of anything, not even the devil...

(She quickly crosses herself, almost contradicting herself. Lights fade. CALLETANA takes her “cart” C and turns it around. It is now a podium. CALLETANA shyly approaches the podium. Spotlight on her.)

We are here to tell you that we are just trying to survive. We are not taking away any big profits from the stores where we sell at because whatever we make is only to get by. To feed our families. We are not on the streets robbing, committing crimes, or hurting the economy like we are blamed. But just because we’re “illegal aliens,” as you call us, doesn’t mean we have no voice. But why are we “illegal”? I don’t understand. What is our crime? Wanting to survive and feed our children? That is the right of every human being. Because even if we are undocumented we are part of this city and we contribute to the economy. Today I come to remind you that the streets, the land, and the sun belong to no one. They belong to all of us. And that’s why I come to ask you that you give us the right to earn a living... Gracias. (*CALLETANA walks away from the podium feeling relieved and proud. She goes back to her cart and continues preparing corn with even more pride.*)

I was really nervous, but I told them what I thought they should know. And el Mr. Councilman Woo, ese buen hombre, he tried helping us and everything came out okay. We won the right to sell...I have a dream that one day we



will have a union like Cesar Chavez did for los Campesinos. That's what that Chicanita, la hippie, told me...I would like to have a union between all the street vendors and have medical benefits. I know it's almost impossible, pero gueno, dreaming is free, ¿qué no? Maybe one day we will have a union and the police and the gangs will leave us alone. Because there are a lot of us and maybe with a union things would be different...¡Elotes! ¡Elotes! ¡Elotes con mucho chile! (*Lights slowly fade out.*)

(Lights fade in. One WOMAN takes the altar from C to her corner, UR. She turns around and puts on a Japanese kimono and carries a Japanese fan. She becomes: YOKO "I THINK I'M TURNING JAPANESE" MARTINEZ, The other three WOMEN take their chairs and sit in three different locations onstage. They put on identical "No" masks. YOKO walks gently forward, taking small steps.)

YOKO. Irasshaimase! Tokyo Housu e youkoso. Welcome to Tokyo House of Sushi. (*YOKO runs to MRS. ITO #1 fanning herself.*) Teburu e otsure shimasu. Kore wa anata no menu de gozaimasu. (*YOKO runs to MRS. ITO #3 fanning herself.*) Watashi wa Yoko tomoushimasu. You can call me Yoko. Konban no osusumi wa uni to ikura desu. Tonight's specials are uni and ikura. (*YOKO runs to MRS. ITO #2 fanning herself.*) Nani o nomini narimasu ka. What would you like to drink? (*YOKO runs to MRS. ITO #1 fanning herself.*) Go chyumon wa. What would you like to order? (*YOKO runs to MRS. ITO #2 fanning herself.*) Hai! Arri-gato gozaimasu.... What did you say Mrs. Ito?... You want me to list the names of all the fish used in sushi, in Japanese? Sure! Hai! Maguro, Toro, Katsuo, Saba, Shake, Tai, Hirame, Tako, Suzuki, Ebi, Uni, Hamachi, to...to...ah... ah...ah....(*YOKO has difficulty remembering the rest. She tries to remember, but can't. She breaks out of character.*)

¡Ah, que la chingada! ¡Se me olvido! I forgot! What's it called? I know, I know, I was supposed to have learned all my Japanese lingo by now, but it's hard remembering all those "K" sounds. I'm a Latina, I like things to flow. How do people learn this stuff? How do people make love in this language when it sounds like you're constantly constipated?...¡Ay, dios! (*YOKO gets carried away and then stops herself when she realizes she's putting her foot in her mouth. YOKO runs to MRS. ITO #2 and bows.*) Gomen nasai! (*YOKO runs to MRS. ITO #3.*) Wait, wait, I can learn this language! Please give me one more chance to prove to you I can do it, Mrs. Ito. Please, really, really, onegaishimasu!... (*YOKO bows very low in front of MRS. ITO #3. Beat.*) You see, you see. I do know Japanese...I need this job! You don't know what I've been through. I tried getting a job at a French restaurant but they were so rude I had to quit. Then I went to a Brazilian restaurant but they said I needed to be darker, but I don't tan, I burn. Then I worked at an Italian restaurant, but the owner kept pinching me in the ass, and I had to quit because I told his wife, and she got the restaurant in her settlement. So you see I really need this job!! (*She does a*



physical Kabuki theater movement to show how distressed she is.) You see, you see. I do know Japanese culture. Did you just get that Kabuki theater reference thing I just did for you? *(YOKO gives herself away.)*

Okay, okay. I don't actually need this job. I just want it to increase my chances of meeting Japanese men. You see, I've been working in Mexican restaurants too long and all I meet are Mariachis, day laborers, soccer players, busboys, dishwashers, relatives of all of the above, and I just don't want to end up marrying...a Latino man. I want something different. It's not like I'm looking for a man with a Ph.D. and a Rolls Royce and a mansion, or nothing. I just want my life to be different. I want somebody different. I want a man who is gentle, kind, who doesn't scream. I'm tired of men screaming at me...So you see, Mrs. Ito, since I've never seen Japanese men screaming, except like in them Bruce Lee movies...*(MRS. ITO(s) lifts her face, upset.)* Oh, they're Chinese, huh? Well, see, I figure they're gentle enough. I can deal with the sexism and the tiny penises. *Watachi wa anata no chinco o aishitemasu.* See, see, I just said in Japanese "I love your dick." Look, I'll say it again. *(YOKO runs to MRS. ITO #3.)* *Watachi wa anata no chinco o aishitemasu.* I'll say it again. *(YOKO runs to MRS. ITO #2.)* *Watachi wa anata no chinco o aishitemasu.* I mean, not to infer that all Japanese men have small penises, I mean, who cares, it's not like it's the most important thing. Small, medium, large, they're all the same to me. *Fune okisawa mondai dewa nakute yarikata no mondai desu.* It's not the size of the ship, but the motion of the ocean. But you know what I mean? *Wakarimashita ka...* I just can't deal with screaming. It's not the actual screaming that bothers me, it's the face of a man screaming, it's his expression, it's his aggression, it's his fist screaming at me... I just don't want to end up marrying my father...*(YOKO is about to start crying. Then, she strikes a Kabuki theatre crying pose instead.)*

Did you get this Kabuki reference thing, too?...Yeah, I guess I could easily just marry a white guy, but they're passionless...No! No, not to say that all white men are passionless, it just turns out that all the white guys I've been with have been passionless. They didn't have what Latinos call "las chispas," or as you would say "hibana," sparks. They were very nice men, who were more open-minded, but something was missing. Like in bed there were no "Te amo mi'jita," "Ti amo carrina," You know Italian is such a beautiful language, but Italian men are just like Mexican men...*(YOKO runs to MRS. ITO #3.)* Mrs. Ito, I know I don't look Japanese. I know that by the very fact that I have large breasts practically disqualifies me from passing for Japanese, but I'll tie them up; no one will know I'm a 36D, I swear!...Oh, I'm sorry, no I didn't mean to imply that Japanese women have small breasts. No, I mean, who cares. The French have a saying, "Les femme qui n'ont pas de poitrine sont le meilluers. Les homme puet etre plu porche a leur cuore." They say that French men, I



heard this one Japanese woman claim, prefer flat-chested women because they can get closer to their hearts...*(YOKO runs to MRS. ITO #2.)* Look Mrs. Ito. I'm Mexican, and aside from having large breasts I've also got huge hips and sometimes I wish I were Japanese so I'd eat a lot of fish and rice and not have to worry about my weight. I mean, I'm on a diet right now, but I'm Mexican, so that's impossible... You know the secret to good Mexican food is la grasa, or as you'd say "abura," grease. You see, that's another reason I want this job. So I can go on a diet, eat lots of fish, and get down to a marriageable size...*(YOKO runs to MRS. ITO #3.)* Mrs. Ito, Mrs. Ito, aside from the Japanese, I'm a great waitress. I've been a waitress all my life. In fact, it's the only thing I know how to do, aside from some Kabuki theater and a little Flamenco. Otherwise, if I could I... I know I'm not that smart, but I know how to take orders, I smile, and I don't water. Please give me one more chance, onegaishimasu. I don't know what else to tell you but the truth... I just need a chance. *(After a few seconds of waiting for a response, YOKO lowers her head and is about to go into the kitchen. MRS. ITO(s) rise. YOKO stops and is surprised.)* You will?! Okay. Ah, just for today. No, okay. I'll get started right away...*(YOKO excitedly runs, then she stops and turns to them.)* Mrs. Ito, Mrs. Ito... Domo arrigato gozaimasu. *(YOKO bows her head gratefully. MRS. ITO(s) bow back. Lights fade out.)*

(Lights fade in. The altar has been moved UC. We are at the Hollenbeck Police Station. One WOMAN enters and becomes: ROXIE "THE SELF-DEFENSE INSTRUCTOR," a tough-looking Latina, wearing jeans, cowboy boots with steel heels, and a sleeveless blouse that shows off her tattoos. She could easily be mistaken for a "butch" lesbian, but she's not. Her core is very feminine, her exterior is very masculine. She sits in handcuffs trying to explain her side of the story. She is frustrated and tries to control her anger. Three WOMEN sit in their chairs, they become POLICE OFFICERS listening to ROXIE.)

ROXIE. I can't believe you're really going to book me, officer. I did it out of self-defense. I thought he was going to attack me so I attacked him before he tried it. How was I supposed to know he wasn't going to attack me? So what that he claims he wasn't going to attack me. Of course! What's he going to say? "Yeah I was going to attack her, rape her, and leave her for dead, but she hit me in the balls before I had a chance to throw her on the floor and punch her face"? I'm innocent! Why would I attack a man for no reason? *(She knows she's not convincing anybody.)*

Okay, let me explain... But first, take these handcuffs off of me. I'm gonna need to demonstrate what I did...

POLICEWOMAN #1 *(muttering)*. Fuckin' dyke...

ROXIE. I'm not a lesbian and what has that got to do with it? *(One*



POLICEWOMAN removes the handcuffs from her. One POLICEWOMAN gestures with her hand to ask if she was drinking.)

No, I wasn't drinking. Oh, yeah, I did. I drank a "7-Up," and, yeah, I know I'm not supposed to be walking by myself at night. I'm a self-defense instructor, I teach these things... Yeah, I'm not joking. I got harassed so much by men. I got tired of their threatening remarks so I took a self-defense class. I got so good at it I decided to teach it... Yeah, I'm angry, wouldn't you be if men constantly grabbed at your breasts? You're walking down the street and some man just slips his hand in and grabs your breasts and when you cuss him out he laughs... I can see you wouldn't understand... I'm not saying you're flat-chested, I just think the police uniform makes you look it... I'm not a lesbian, and I haven't been looking at your breasts... *(ROXIE stands up with her hands at her waist with her breasts sticking up.)*

You know I wasn't always like this... Really... When I was young I was flat-chested, *(Aside.)*... too. I wasn't that young, about eleven, twelve. I remember I was a real tomboy back then...

(Lights fade a little and ROXIE reminisces and becomes the 12-year-old she used to be.)

One day, I remember I was waiting in line to borrow a football and this guy ahead of me turned around, checked me out, and said out loud so that all the other boys could hear him, "Hey, flat-chested!" I knew he was talking to me but I ignored him. He knew I heard him and he got closer and stared at my chest... He was right. I was flat. *(She sits.)*

So that day, I remember sitting on the toilet staring at my chest. "It's hopeless!" I thought. "I'm one of the few girls in sixth grade who still doesn't have chichis"... After getting tired of looking at my ugly, tiny, minuscule, nipples, I got up and went to my older sisters' drawers and started looking for a bra. I got the smallest I could find and I put it on, but it was still too big. I stuffed some toilet paper in both cups and it felt so good to have breasts. I raced my hands up and down my new breasts, enjoying the pleasure they gave me. But I stopped because I knew God was watching... So I took off the bra and sat back on the toilet... *(She looks up to God, then she slowly gets on her knees.)*

And it occurred to me that if God was watching, God would also be listening. I closed my eyes and I prayed. "Dear God, please give me breasts. I will be a good human being... I will do your will, I will be an honest person, I will be good."

(We hear holy music and ROXIE slowly stands up from her praying position and raises her arms to God then lowers them as though they were wings and finally



points to her breasts. The older ROXIE is now back.)

...I believe there is a God. I got breasts quickly after that. So the next time I saw that guy, he didn't even recognize me...I love having big breasts. I'm not saying I'm a better woman for having them, I just think they're a beautiful part of me...Sometimes my sisters and girlfriends make fun of me because of their size, I don't mind. I love my breasts. They are my connection with God. Thank you, God, for making me a woman!...I used to have boyfriends who were atheists. But I made believers out of them. Or at least I think so, because they used to say, "Oh, my God, they're so big!" I would tell them, when you touch them, let them be your reminders that there is a God...I wonder if God is a woman?...So when men just walk by and grab my breasts like it's their right, in my eyes they're committing a sin against God! They are taking away my connection with God. They are desecrating my nipples—I mean temples. Because this body belongs to me!!! The last time a jerk grabbed my breast I felt so helpless. I cried for an hour when I got home. Then the next day I went to my first self-defense class...Soon after I was teaching my own self-defense class...

(Lights fade in completely. ROXIE is standing erect and strong, teaching her own class.)

In order to not be a victim, you have to stop acting like one! Lift your heads high, walk with confidence. Defending yourself is only a matter of using your five weapons. Your hands, fingers, knees, legs, and your voice against his five vulnerable parts. His eyes, nose, throat, groin, and knee. It only takes forty pounds of pressure to dislocate a knee. Not every woman here will be attacked, but one out of three women will be raped within her lifetime. When it comes to defending yourself, any woman can...The first thing we will learn is your basic hand release...*(She demonstrates by holding one of her hands at the wrist with the other.)*

When a man has grabbed you by the wrists...First of all, never let a stranger invade your personal space. Your personal space is the space at arms' length around you...So if you're being pulled by the wrists, don't pull. Just make a fist and twist against his thumb because it is the weakest part of the hand and the hand will release. Then you run and yell "fire." Don't yell "rape" because people might not come. Yell "fire" as loud as you can or if you're in L.A. you can also try yelling earthquake. People will come look only when it concerns them...So everybody get up and let's do it!

(Lights fade a little. ROXIE is no longer the self-assured and confident instructor.)

But even with all the knowledge and training I still got raped...I didn't know that I had gotten raped until I read a magazine article that said that when



a man has sex with a woman when she is not conscious, it is rape. I wasn't drunk, I was just falling asleep. I was so tired. I wanted to spend the night in bed with him just talking and then he was on top of me. I couldn't yell "fire," I couldn't kick or fight back. He kept wanting it and I just submitted. It was so casual that when I woke up I just thought it was unpleasant...*(She shakes her head and becomes the tough woman that she is.)*

So I don't let any man get into my personal space. That man should have known better following a woman at night and asking for the time! That's just plain stupid!...No, I'm not saying he was "asking for it." I just think some men have to be sympathetic and aware of the fear they provoke in women. All the rest already know and they laugh when they see it in us...So that's it. That's my confession. Are you gonna let me go? *(She waits, anticipating resistance. Then their response surprises her.)*

POLICEWOMAN #2. You can go.

ROXIE. I can go?! I can go! I'd know you'd understand...

POLICEWOMAN #3. He dropped the charges.

ROXIE. He dropped the charges? Oh, I'm glad...

POLICEWOMAN #3. But you gotta apologize...

ROXIE. I have to apologize?! Apologize? Apologize!...Do I legally have to?...*(Sarcastically.)* Oh, I should, after all I attacked him...Oh, no, I'm very grateful to him! *(ROXIE feels like punching something or somebody. She finally controls herself and makes a deal with herself.)*

Sure, I'll apologize...I just want to get the hell out of here! Man, either way, we lose!...Where is he?! *(ROXIE marches out angry, but contained. Lights fade out.)*

(Lights fade in. We are in a Chicano Studies class. One WOMAN walks up to the altar and brings it C. She turns the altar around and it becomes a podium. Two FEMALE STUDENTS are seated on the floor. One WOMAN is at the podium finishing her speech. The fourth WOMAN becomes: TIFFANY "THE BORN-AGAIN CHICANA." TIFFANY is light, with light brown hair. She is at the front of the class, seated, wearing trendy clothes and lots of jewelry. TIFFANY is a born-again Chicana who grew up in the valley. TIFFANY is waiting to go on next. STUDENT #1 is at the podium finishing her speech.)

STUDENT #1. Thank you for listening to my speech...¡Viva la Raza!... Oh, Tiffany is next. *(TIFFANY hesitantly goes to the front of the podium and begins reading her speech. It is in Spanish and she is having difficulty with her pronunciation.)*



TIFFANY (*with Valley Girl accent*). Las razones que nuestra raza debe resistir este racismo es que, es que, es que...No, I can't do it! I know, I know. I signed up to give a speech to denounce Proposition 187, but, I can't do it in Spanish! Well, maybe I can, I just can't get the "Rrrr's" right...Okay, okay, I'll try it again...Las razones que... (TIFFANY takes a moment and breathes deeply.) I can't do it! Like I'm not in the right frame of mind...I just got into an argument with my boyfriend...

STUDENT #2. Again?

TIFFANY. Yeah, again, sooo! We argue a lot because I think it like turns me on. Julio is a Brown Beret and he can debate the hell out of people. Anyway, last night I heard the bad news...

STUDENT #1. Oh, what's that?

TIFFANY. Well, it was for me, okay? So like I had to deal with it, all right? Last night I heard that Madonna purchased the film rights to the biography of Frida Kahlo and wanted to star in the role. Like when I heard that, I thought it was perhaps like a bad episode of the "Twilight Zone." Like ¡o mi dios! Oh, my God! How outrageous! And then they, Hollywood, wanted Julia Roberts to star in the role but she like turned it down because of the controversy it would create. I was really glad Julia showed some conscience. Now I know who is going to play the role and my mind aches, in disgust, disbelief, and insult. I mean, like last night I couldn't go to sleep...I mean, because I thought there is something I have to do. Like someone should tell Frida...because like she should know. If she were alive she'd be cursing in disbelief. (*In bad Spanish.*) "¡Pos que chingados, éstos pinches gringos!" So last night I began writing to her. I know, I know, how ridiculous, huh? But I had to do it...

STUDENT #2. Are you going to mail it?

TIFFANY. Am I going to mail it?! Don't make fun of me, my fellow Chicano hermana.

STUDENT #3. Where are you going to address it to?

TIFFANY. Where am I going to address it to?! Oh, ha, ha, ha...Like the world beyond. Like 666 Death Row. Like the cosmos. Like the Kingdom of God. Like I don't know!...I just wanted to share this letter with the class, being that if I don't do my speech I'll fail the class. All right? Can I do this instead, Professor? (*She waits for approval. Then she proceeds to prepare herself to share her letter.*)

Okay, cool...But wait, Professor, can you like remove that insensitive "Chicanosaurus Rex" before I start? No, oh, well, could you at least fail her if she laughs? Really, you will? ¡Orale! (TIFFANY clears her throat.)



“Dear Frida...Dear Frida, I’m writing to you because I think you need to know. Ayy, Frida, last night I found out this Italian chick is gonna play you in a Hollywood movie. Not that there’s anything wrong with being Italian. You know, I used to think I was Italian several years ago when I was ‘in denial about being Mexican,’ or at least that’s why my Chicano boyfriend has convinced me I did... Okay, you know, like that wasn’t my fault, all right? My mom married an Anglo man when she lived in Texas. And she stopped speaking Spanish because the teachers would punish her for doing it and she didn’t want me to suffer the way she did. My mother became a Republican to fit in with my father’s family. So, Julio still blames me for lacking the conscience. I mean, he quotes Marx to me. ‘It is not a man’s conscience that determines his existence, but it is the existence of a man that determines his conscience.’ So I like argue back that despite my existence I can still gain a Chicano conscience, right?...Okay, fine, like that’s another story...” (*TIFFANY continues with her letter.*)

“Why should they cast an Italian chick? Why not a Mexican, or Chicana, or Latina actress? What are they doing to you? (*Beat.*) Every time I see your image I cringe because I know Madonna wants to play you. She paid three million for the film rights to your biography. I can just imagine Madonna dressing up as you and including you in her dance and song act. Dressing up with flowers in her head and exploiting our indigenous fashion heritage. Like I’m...” shhhh!!!...Julio thinks I should stop wearing these clothes or I should dye my hair black and get some sun because I’m too pale. I remember when I thought I was better because I was a light-skinned Mexican, but now I wish I had like jet black hair, like brown, brown skin, and like really full, full lips... Okay, fine!...(TIFFANY gets back on track and continues with her letter.)

“Now everybody loves you. People worship you, you’re a fad. They have ‘discovered’ you like they ‘discovered’ the Americas. You’re a newfound treasure, and your paintings are selling in the millions. And it doesn’t bother anyone you were bisexual or that you had a moustache. People love you even more...” Love, you know, like what is love? I think I love Julio, but I don’t think he loves me. Or at least it seems he’s always saying like I should be something else. Like he’s in love with what I could be but not with what I am...(TIFFANY becomes serious and continues reading the letter more passionately. Her Spanish has gotten a lot better now.)

“But you were my inspiration first. My first ray of hope when I had no self-esteem. When I had no role models. Your paintings gave me courage because I could identify with your coraje. I liked you immediately because you weren’t ‘beautiful.’ But you had an attitude and a sense of humor that made your physical predicament less painful to yourself and those around you. And I’m writing to tell you that when the hype is over, I will still have those images



from your paintings imprinted in my conscience and...I know they can't take you away from me, because you'll always be en mi corazón...Sincerely, Tiffany." (*Her fellow STUDENTS applaud. TIFFANY gains confidence.*)

Professor, could I like do the speech for you? I think I can do it now. (*She takes a moment to breathe and begins.*) Las razones que nuestra raza debe resistir este racismo es que la Proposicion 187 es un ataque contra todos. Primero comienzan con los Latinos, despues con los Asiaticos, y todos los demas que no son Anglo-Saxones. ¿Qual es la diferencia entre Wilson and Hitler? ¡Si como Hitler que se encargo de tratar de desacerse con toda una raza, asi Wilson quiere desacerse de nuestra raza! ¡¡Por eso todos los Latinos debemos luchar contra la Proposicion 187!! (*TIFFANY makes a realization.*) Excuse me, but like, I have to go break up with my boyfriend...(*TIFFANY walks out. Lights fade out.*)

(*Lights fade in a little. The altar is in front of one WOMAN. She opens a compartment in the altar. A little light inside of it flickers giving the illusion that it is radiating an image like a television. The WOMAN, sitting back watching television with the remote control in her hand, becomes: DOÑA FLORINDA "THE TV SOAP OPERA ADDICT," short, large, with auburn hair; its roots showing, wearing a floral tent dress, and knee-high stockings. THREE WOMEN also sit in front of their imaginary television, each with a remote control. We hear soap opera music as DOÑA FLORINDA gets up from her chair and walks C. The THREE WOMEN put their remote controls down and become part of the support group. DOÑA FLORINDA stands alone in silence. She stares at the audience for a minute before she finally speaks.*)

DOÑA FLORINDA. My name is Florinda...

SUPPORT GROUP. Hola, Florinda.

DOÑA FLORINDA. and...I'm a...addicted to...I am a TV soap opera addict...But only the Spanish ones! I don't get "Ryan's Hope" or "General Hospital" or "One Life To Live." No le hallo el chiste. They go on for years and if you ask me I think they stole the plots from the Spanish telenovelas. I did watch "Santa Barbara" for a while when that Latino hunk A Martinez was on it. Ayy que papasito. But then that gringa wife of his got so annoying. She was such a chillona and I stopped watching it. Pero eso si, even the soaps in Spanish—I only watch the Mexican ones. No me gustan las de Venezuela or Puerto Rico or with (*Disgusted.*) prietos and mulatos. I don't know why... Oh, but the Brazilian ones are the best even though they have mulatos. So, I'm not really an addict addict...Oh, no, I'm "rationalizing," I'm sorry...(Reciting.) "The road to recovery is acceptance"...so I must accept that I am a telenovela addict and unless I deal with my illness I will continue to ruin my life, waste away, gain more weight, lose my children and my third husband, and my



hemorrhoids won't get any better. (*DOÑA FLORINDA breaks down crying. Her crying is very dramatic, as if she were in a soap opera herself. A short time later she collects herself and finds the courage to continue.*)

My husband, who is Cuban, who looks like the galan in my favorite Spanish TV soap "Juan Del Diablo," told me I had to get help or he would leave me... He always says that "Spanish TV soaps, telenovelas, are the 'opium of the Latino masses,' the work of the CIA to keep Latin America pacified through the transmission of subliminal messages and micro x-rays which in the long run deteriorate brain cells at a rate faster than marijuana and alcohol"...I don't know what he means. All I know is that telenovelas have ruined my life...(DOÑA FLORINDA breaks down crying again. She falls to the floor dramatically. The THREE WOMEN go to her aid with their remote controls and press them as if zapping her with imaginary rays that give her a feeling of comfort.)

I've lost two husbands because of this. I didn't start out watching soaps in my marriage, but every time my husband and my children would ignore me after I took care of their needs I would watch the telenovelas so I wouldn't get bored. Then I got so involved with the telenovelas I neglected my husbands and my kids. Both my husbands warned me to quit it. So I started hiding in the bathroom watching them on my TV Walkman. When my husbands found out, they'd break them. But that didn't stop me. It got so bad I even learned how to operate and program a VCR so I could tape them and watch them at midnight when my husbands were sleeping. So I wouldn't sleep at night and during the day I was a zombie. I would just sleep and my youngest son Tomas would go hungry. I'd give him money for fast food or heat him a frozen meal. He is twelve years old and weighs two hundred and fifty pounds and no one invites him to their birthday parties...(DOÑA FLORINDA breaks down crying again, by now her crying is annoying. She walks back to her chair next to the TV.)

One day I got so upset because my telenovela was interrupted by a newsbreak only to find out my daughter was holding up a K-mart and she was holding the "Blue Light Special" announcer hostage. (*The THREE WOMEN go to her aid and sit around DOÑA FLORINDA trying to comfort her, but they all get hooked on the telenovela.*)

Then another day I was switching channels from one telenovela in a commercial break to my other telenovela and I saw my son as a "transvestite who wants to get a sex change" on the talk show "Cristina." He kept telling Cristina that all he wanted was his mother to give him some attention; to connect with me. He kept calling out my name, begging Cristina to tell me, just in case I was watching, that he loved me. And you know what I did? I



changed the channel and continued watching my tele-novela. *(She blows her nose. The THREE WOMEN go back to their chairs.)*

If I'm supposed to say "no" to telenovelas then what do I say "yes" to? Why would I want to give them up when I've got nothing else in my life. As stupid or as dumb as telenovelas are accused of being, they are still more interesting than my life. All I have to say "yes" to is regret. I followed my mother's advice and I did everything she told me...She told me not to elope with a man because he was poor and a...mulato. He loved me con una passion, but my mother thought he was beneath me, muy poca cosa, "What kind of a life" would I have with him? "What will people say?" *(Her tears are gentle, she's no longer annoying or dramatic.)* I didn't go with him when he came for me that night...Mi negrito, my beautiful mulato pleaded with me to go with him, but I listened to my mother...So I got the kind of life I never wanted... When I watch tele-novelas I'm the bad girl. I'm the puta. I'm the woman who steals the men, who cheats, who makes her mother suffer, who throws acid at beautiful girls' faces...I'm all of them except la santa. *(She smiles and feels relieved.)*

I am here because I need help. I must give them up before my 12-year-old explodes. Before my daughter gets out of jail from "juvi," and before my son decides he's going to have the sex change. ¡Que drama! My life has gotten to be like a telenovela. Especially since I appeared on "Cristina" last week and confronted my son publicly and discovered my husband was having an affair with la vecina, and my daughter is pregnant. All my neighbors saw it and the chisme on my block has gotten out of hand. Hijole, the rumors people are spreading about me! It's actually exciting! Ah, miren, someone should make a telenovela about my life and get Charro to play me or someone like her, ¿qué no? And maybe it could be called "Por Un Hombre Guapo," "Tres Veces Casada," "A Woman And Her TV"...Oh, I'm sorry, I'm "rationalizing" again... *(Pause.)* I'm doing my best and I am taking one day at a time. I'm down to only watching one tele-novela a day. "Juan Del Diablo." It will be over next week so it's not that bad, but I can't wait to find out what's going to happen!... *(She looks at her watch.)* ¡Hijole! Ya va a empezar la telenovela de las ocho. Ya me tengo que ir! I'm sorry, but I have to go...*(DOÑA FLORINDA quickly goes back to her chair, pulls out the remote control, and watches TV. The THREE WOMEN also take out their remote controls and watch TV. Lights fade out.)*

(Lights fade in. The altar has been moved C and is now a podium. We are at "Killer Tacos" basement, a taco shop/hair salon by day and a revolutionary's secret gathering place at night. THREE WOMEN are seated in their chairs enthusiastically talking about current events in the news. One WOMAN enters and becomes: MARISA "LA VALENTINA" CHAVEZ, a Chicana, who is fed up with Republicans and racism. She is dressed in black pants, a red t-shirt, and



black combat boots. She walks to the center, takes command, getting everyone's attention.)

VALENTINA. Everybody settle down!! We're going to start now because I don't believe in Latino Time. Thank you for coming. Welcome to "Killer Tacos," I know the basement is not the best place to hold a meeting but since it was last-minute, and since being a revolutionary is a 24-hour job in public and in private, I hope you don't mind the basement. So I'm glad to see that most of you are here instead of dancing the night away at "Peppers." My name is... Valentina. Named after "La Valentina," for those of you who haven't taken a Mexican History course, take one... She was the Mexican woman general that fought alongside Pancho Villa...

WOMAN (*whispers to another WOMAN*). Is that her real name?

VALENTINA. No, that's not my real name, I can't give you my name because I'm planning to start a riot today! I'm going to set fires. I'm going to set fires in you. You know what was wrong with the L.A. riot? It was unorganized! That's what a riot is. Unorganized rage! Think of all that anger, all the passions, all that belief that justice was not being done. All the civil disobedience. Imagine what could have been accomplished instead, if all that anger, all that rage, and passion was focused, united, like a laser beam... But all that was accomplished was brute violence... Oh, and by the way, anybody got any stereo or video equipment they can donate to the East L.A. Community Center?... Thought I'd ask... (*She looks around, but no one makes an offer.*)

Today I heard something very disturbing and I wanted to cry, but tears don't change things; action does. It's 1996 gente, raza, but before we know it, with all the Republicans in office, it will be 1950 again! Women won't be able to get safe and legal abortions, affirmative action will be gone, under-represented people like us won't have equal access to jobs... All that was fought for and accomplished in the '60s will be lost. People will get so desperate they'll have nothing to lose because everything will have been taken away from them. People are gonna get themselves a white person and shoot them. When I found out Pete Wilson was going to go after affirmative action that's what I wanted to do. When I saw the beating of the defenseless undocumented woman by a sheriff in Riverside on National TV, that's what I wanted to do.

...Gente, I'm telling you, we can no longer just sit back and say, "Oh, they're just trying to scare us." Before we know it, if we continue with that attitude, we'll all be on a train, but not to Mexico. To a desert somewhere, like they did to the Japanese-Americans. And they're not just going to hold us there, they'll send us to the ovens like the Nazis did to the Jews. You think I'm exaggerating? You think I'm shitting you? You think it's 1996 and this can't happen? Well, yeah, it's 1996, and the ERA, the Equal Rights Amendment, twenty-four



fucking little words that say women will be equal under law can't get passed and added to the fucking U.S. fucking Constitution, and yes, it's 1996! Let me tell you, when Republicans or any other racist force start making motions and policies in the name of God, family values, "contract with America," start preparing yourself for the worst. "Manifest Destiny" lives on! And in the words of Martin Luther King, "It is not so much the fault of the bad people, but of the good people who stood by watching and let it happen." Are we going to just sit back and let it happen? No! No! Repeat after me, no!!! (*She throws her fist up in the air and starts doing the Chicano clap. Someone interrupts her.*) What?...Now?... You want me to do it now?...But I had something going here?...All right, a deal's a deal...(*She takes out a cardboard sign that reads: "KILLER TACOS of EAST L.A. Over 1 Million Served."*)

Gente, in exchange for the space, I promised my friend Freddie Lechuga that I would promote his restaurants. And don't anybody accuse me of being a vendida 'cause I know people like to throw that word around like it was a tortilla...So Freddie's passing flyers with coupons for your future visits. Support raza-owned establishments and they will support us. The chips and salsa are also courtesy of him...Let's give him a big Chicano clap to thank him. (*She claps.*) So just remember: "Killer Tacos, if the salsa doesn't kill you, the dog meat will"...Just kidding, Freddie. (*VALENTINA "kicks back" for a minute, then resumes as leader.*)

Okay, everybody, settle down, get your chips and your tamarindo drinks quickly because I have a confession to make...I've lived in this country 23 years...For 15 years I was undocumented, and for 8 years I've held off becoming a U.S. citizen because I didn't feel I was part of this country. It wasn't until I started to read the history of the U.S. and the Americas did I see how our contributions, the contributions of my gente, made this country. It is then that I realized "I am part of this country." The blood, sweat, and tears of my people is what paved the roads for me to get here and claim this country as my own...(*She pulls out an application form and shows it to the group.*)

Do all of you know what this is?...It's an application for U.S. citizenship... Last week I applied to become a citizen. For most of you Chicanos who were born here, it might not be a big deal. But the people who became Chicanos recently, this might be very painful. It was to me... There are two questions in here that took me some time to answer. It asks, "Are you willing to renounce your country of origin for the privilege of becoming a U.S. citizen?" It asks, "Are you willing to fight against any country in defense of the U.S. of A?" I was going to lie and just mark "yes." I'm applying to be a U.S. citizen because I want to vote. I can go to all the rallies, marches, and protests and scream "¡Si se puede!" 'til I turn blue. Pero no se puede unless we can vote. There have been two elections where I could have voted against Bush, against



Republicans, but I didn't. I couldn't answer those two simple question...I still can't. "Will you renounce your country of origin?" Can I? Ah...Yes, but my Mexico, the Mexico that only exists in black and white movies, the only one I got to know, will always be showing in the movie theatre of my mind... "Will I fight against any country in defense of the U.S.?" ...Yes, as long it's not Mexico or any in Latin America, or any people of color, because brothers killing brothers, I'll have none of that, I've already seen too much of that...I will, someday...But I am willing to give up my country in defense of myself, in defense of my spirit...*(She puts the application down on a table and takes a minute to collect herself.)*

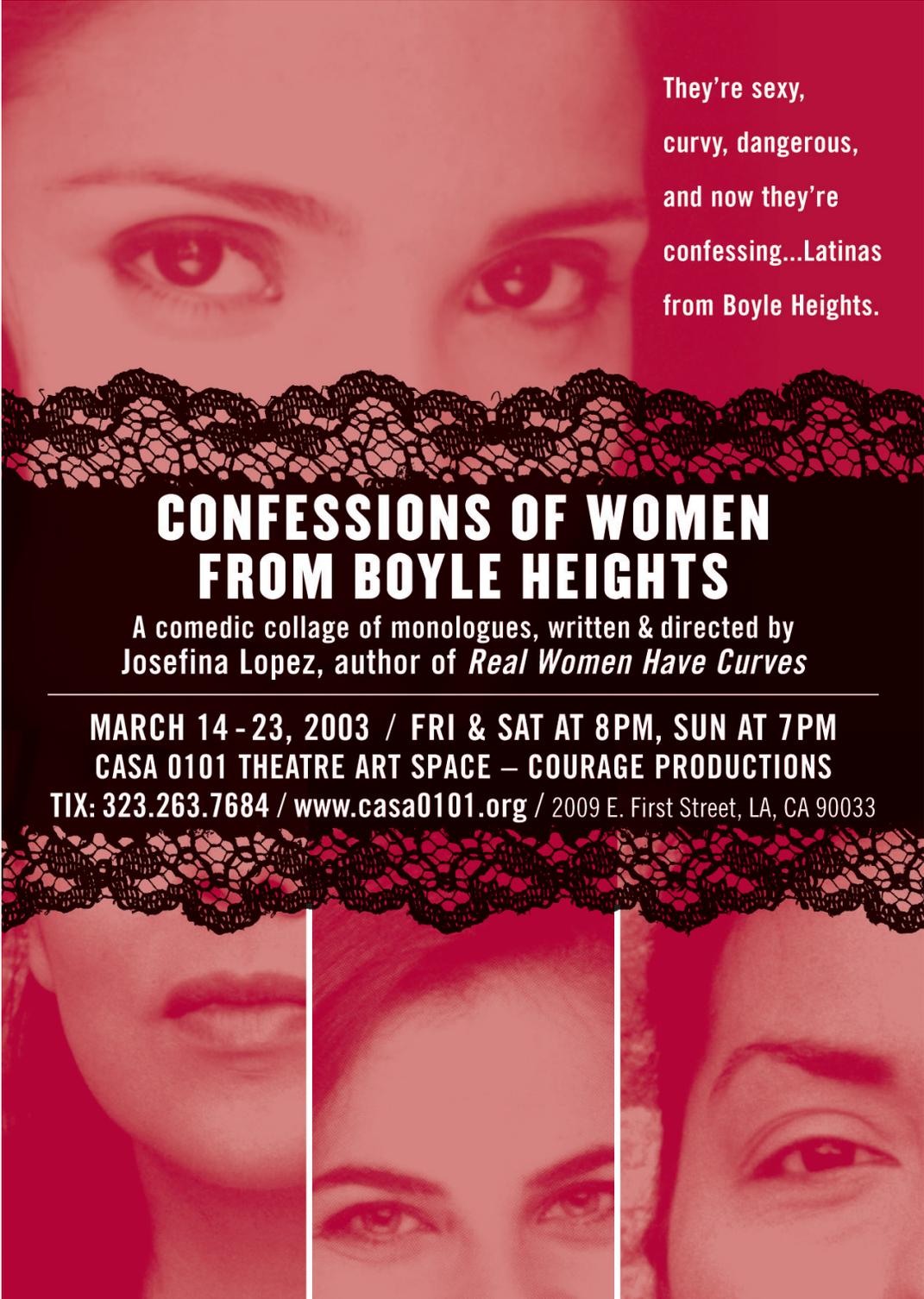
I brought you all here, the "MeCHAs," my "Chicana/ Latina Feminist Support Group," the "Rebels Without A Cause Group," the "Latina Lesbian Alliance," and many others of you that I met at K-mart in the hair-bleaching or condom section. At the parking lot of McDonald's with nothing better to do. At the bus stops stealing movie posters or vandalizing them with the words "Hollywood Sucks." At Little Tokyo trying to pass for Japanese. At "Peppers" waiting in line. At the "Telenovela Addicts Anonymous Meeting." At churches coming out of confession or selling elotes. I even invited "The Machos Against Change Coalition," because I need your help. Our Raza needs your help. Times are getting scarier and dangerous for us. If you don't believe me, just open your eyes. Because we are coming to a point in this country where it is going to come down to voting or violence...Gente, raza, I want you to stand up and turn to one another...So what if she's a lesbian. So what if he's a macho. So what if she's speaking to you in Japanese...Turn to one another and hug each other...Because today the revolution begins...I know you're probably thinking, "How can we start a revolution when we couldn't even get our act together to vote against 187"? I don't know. I just know it is a historic time in the state of California. For the first time we are a majority, but that means nothing if we don't vote. Nothing if we don't vote. This is no longer a "white America," and that is why there is a backlash against us. The closer we get to reaching our goals to liberate ourselves, the more afraid people in the establishment get. And it doesn't matter if you're already a citizen. With Proposition 187 everybody is a suspect. Your brown hair makes you a suspect. Your brown eyes make you a suspect. Your brown skin makes you a suspect! Does it have to come down to that? What will it take for the sleeping giant to awaken? What will it take for our spirits to rise? Voting or violence, now it's one or the other. Awake, my raza, awake! Awake, my raza, awake! Awake, raza!! *(The WOMEN begin to sing a song of unity. They circle her, clapping, while VALENTINA climbs on a chair and does the "Chicano clap." She then walks over to the altar and lights up a stick of sage. The WOMEN continue clapping until they come together at the altar. Lights fade. In the darkness VALENTINA circles the sage in the air and passes it on. Each woman does the*



same and lights fade out.)

The End

They're sexy,
curvy, dangerous,
and now they're
confessing...Latinas
from Boyle Heights.



**CONFESSIONS OF WOMEN
FROM BOYLE HEIGHTS**

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Josefina Lopez, author of *Real Women Have Curves*

MARCH 14 - 23, 2003 / FRI & SAT AT 8PM, SUN AT 7PM
CASA 0101 THEATRE ART SPACE – COURAGE PRODUCTIONS
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Artwork by Gab Lopez @ soapdesign.com



CONFESSIONS OF WOMEN FROM EAST L.A.

GLOSSARY SPANISH

(F) French - (I) Italian - (J) Japanese translations

A, bueno... - Oh, well...

¡A un dolar! - For one dollar!

(J) abura - lard

Ah, miren - Oh, look

¡Ah, que la chingada! - Oh, shit!

Andele, compre me uno... - Come on, buy one...

Andele, seño - Come on, Ms.

Aver, aver - Let's see, let's see.

¡Ay, dios! - Oh, God!

¡Ayy - Oh

Ayy, Papi, como me gustas - Oh, Daddy, how I like you

Ayy, que grandototote estás, chulo - Oh, how big you are, cutie

Ayy, que papasito - Oh, what a babe!

¡Bienvenidas! - Welcome!

borracho - drunk, alcoholic

Chicanita - Chicana term of

endearment

chichis - slang: tits, breasts

chillona - cry baby

Chingóna - (playwright's word:) kick-ass, fighter, femme-fatal

chisme - gossip

cochina - dirty girl

Cochina y mal hablada - Dirty and bad spoken

corazón - heart, soul

de adrede - on purpose

Doctora - Doctor

Dolores - Pains

(J) Domo arrigato gozaimasu - Thank you very much

Doña - Mrs., a sign of respect for an older woman

el pobrecito - my poor husband

¡Elotes! - Corn!

¡Elotes, elotes, con mucho chile! - Corn, corn, with lots of chili pepper!

en mi corazón - in my heart

Eres mi rey - You are my king

ese buen hombre - that good man

eso si que no - that, no way

galan - hero, beau

galan de cine - movie star

gente, raza - (both mean:) my people

Gracias - Thank you



gringa - white woman

gringos - whites, Anglo-Saxon

hermana - sister

Hijole - Oh man

Hola - Hello

¡Hola muchachas! - Hello gals!

Juan Del Diablo - Juan of the Devil

la - the

La Elotera - The corn lady

La Llorona - The crying woman; a famous Mexican legend about a woman who killed her children, threw them into a river, and then committed suicide. However, God would not let her into heaven until she found her children, so her spirit roams the rivers of Mexico looking for her children.

la santa - the saint

la vecina - the neighbor

las chispas - sparks

Las razones que... - The reasons are...

Las razones que nuestra raza debe resistir éste racismo es

que, es que, es que... - The reasons our people must resist this racism is that, is that, is that...

Las razones que nuestra raza debe resistir este racismo es

que la Proposicion 187 es un ataque contra todos. Primero

comienzan con los Latinos, despues con los Asiaticos, y

todos, los demas que no son Anglo-Saxones. ¿Qual es la

diferencia entre Wilson y Hitler? ¿Si como Hitler que se

encargo de tratar de desacerse con toda una raza, asi Wilson quiere desacerse de nuestra raza! ¡Por eso todos los Latinos debemos luchar contra la Proposicion 187!! - The reasons our people must resist this racism is that Proposition 187 is an attack against all of us. First they begin with Latinos, then with the Asians, and then everyone else who is not an Anglo-Saxon. What is the difference between Wilson and Hitler? Like Hitler, who took charge of getting rid of a group of people, Wilson would like to get rid of our people! That is why all Latinois must fight against Proposition 187!!

(F) Les femme qui n'ont pas de poitrine sont le meilluers. Les homme puet etre plu porche a leur cuore - Women who don't have breasts are the best. Men can get closer to their hearts.

Lolita - nickname derrivative of Dolores

los campesinos - the farmworkers

Machos - traditional Mexican men who behave as though they are superior to women

mejor que la gosen los humanos a que se la coman los gusanos - better that humans enjoy it than the worms



eat it	it...
mensa - dummy	pinchi - expletive, stupid
mi chatita - my flat-nosed one, (term of endearment)	pito - slang: dick
Mi'jita - my darling	Por un Hombre Guapo - For a Handsome Man
mi'jitas - my little daughters, darlings	¡Pos que chingados, éstos pinches gringos! Oh, those damned whites!
mi negrito - my little black one, (term of endearment)	prieta - dark one, (mestiza)
mulatos - black/dark people	prietos - darkies
Ni me crea - Don't believe me	Prietos y sencillos tal vez, pero - Dark and simple-looking, maybe, but
Nixtamal - cornmeal	prostitutas - prostitutes
No le hallo el chiste - I don't get it.	pues - then
No me gustan - I don't like them.	puta - slut, whore
No mucho - Not much.	¡Qué drama! - What drama!
No, no, no mas 'stoy bromiando - No, no, I'm only joking.	¿Qué no? - Don't you think?
N'ombre - No way man.	Que rico, suave - How delicious, smooth...
¡O mi dios! Oh my God	¡Que se vallan a la chingada! - then they can go to hell!
(J) Onegaishimasu! - Please, I beg of you!	raza - our people
¡Orale! - Cool! Yeah!	Sabroso - tasty
Padre - Father, priest	Se enchilo tanto - The salsa got to him, his tongue got irritated by the salsa
Papi - Daddy	¡Se me olvido! - I forgot!
pendejada - stupidty	Señorita - Miss, lady
pendejadas - stupidities	¡Si se puede! - Yes we can do it!
Pero eso si - However/But	Si te dije... - If I told you...
pero gueno - but, oh well	Si te dije que te amaba con toda mi
pero mi hija - but my daughter	
Pero no se puede - But we can't do	



alma... - If I told you that I loved you
with all my soul...

Si te quise fue porque... - If I liked
you it was because...

Squincla mal pintada - an over-
painted slutty girl

Te amo mi'jita - I love you my darling

(J) Teburu e otsurue shimasu. Kore
wa anata no menu de gozaimasu -
This way to your table. Here is your
menu.

telenovelas - soap operas

(I) Ti amo carrina - I love you darling

Tres Veces Casada - Three Times
Married

Un viejo chancludo, peludo - A hairy,
dirty old man

¡Vamonos! Let's go!

vendida - sell-out

viejo rabo verde - dirty old man

(J) Wakarimashita ka - Do you
understand?

welferosos - slang: welfare recipients

Y si no - And if not

ya ni la friegas - you messed it up

Ya parale - Stop it already

Ya va a empezar la telenovela de las
ocho. ¡Ya me tango que ir! - The eight
o'clock soap opera is about to start. I
have to go now!





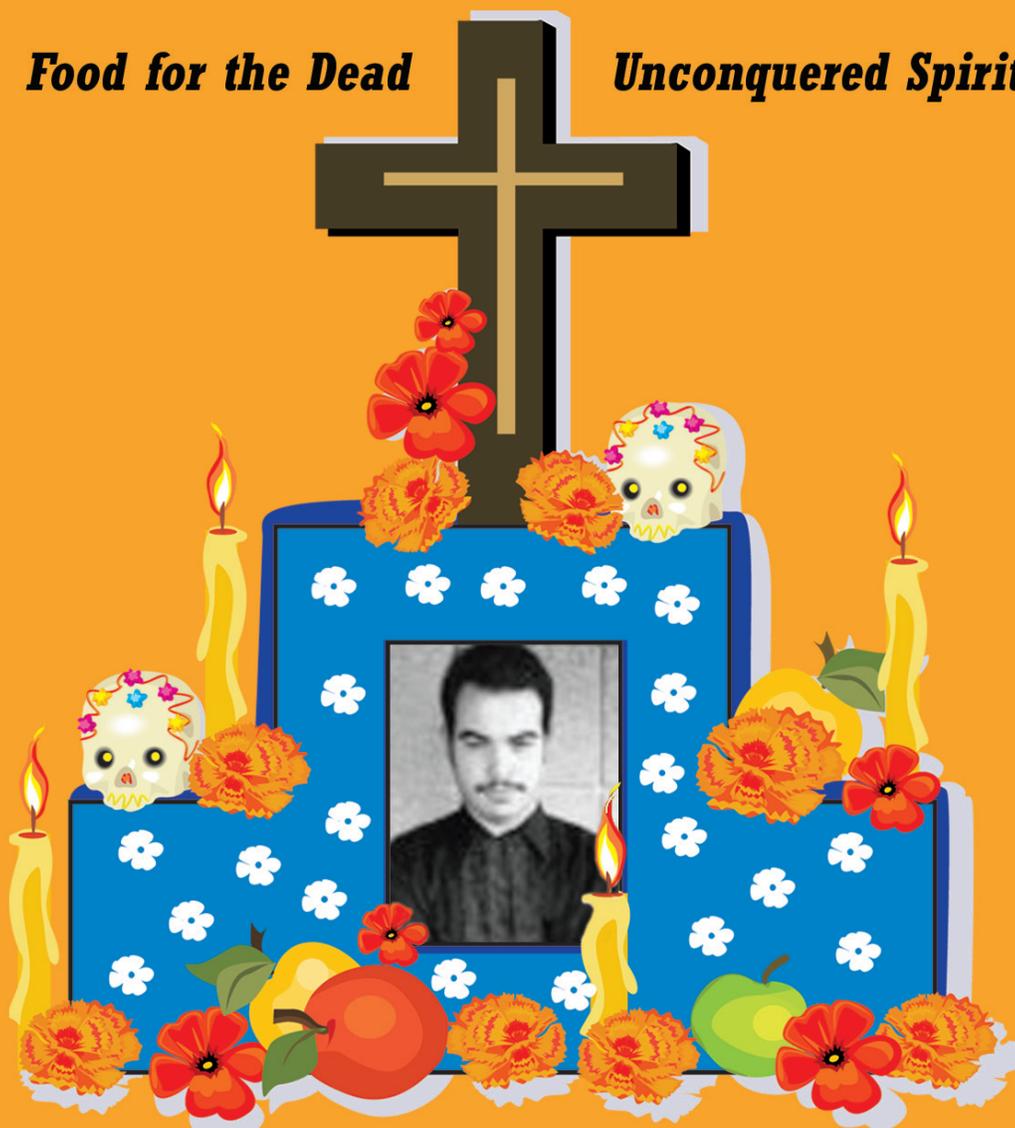
CASA 0101 is proud to present

A DAY OF THE DEAD CELEBRATION

with Two One Acts by Josefina Lopez:

Food for the Dead

Unconquered Spirit



November 5-21, 2010

Artwork by Gab Lopez @ soapdesign.com



FOOD FOR THE DEAD

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

My father and my brothers used to tease my little brother because he didn't want to play sports. My father would often say that if one of his sons ever turned out to be a homosexual he would rather die than live with the shame. Then I began to wonder what would happen if one day my little brother came home and announced he was gay. I thought, "All hell would break loose!"

So there came the idea for *Food for the Dead*. I wrote it when I was 19 while I was at New York University studying dramatic writing. At that time I felt very alienated. I was the only Latina in my writing class and I felt like no one understood where I was coming from. I was experiencing so much cultural shock that I wanted to write something that celebrated my culture. Also, I had a friend who was Latino, gay and a playwright, but he wouldn't write about being gay and neither would a couple of other Latino gay playwrights I also knew.

So I attempted to write about it. Since I'm not gay and didn't do enough research I ended up making a lot of innocent mistakes and some of the actors from the University of California, San Diego production were offended. At one meeting with the actors I was given so many notes and complaints that I told my mentor Jorge Huerta, "I'm not going to write anymore." He encouraged me not to give up and I tried my best to do a rewrite, address the comments and improve the play. I like this play. It was fun to write it, but very painful to rewrite it and I finally decided to let it be as it is.



Josefina López

Los Angeles

April 3, 1996



FOOD FOR THE DEAD

A ONE ACT PLAY

SETTING:

Candela's dining room in Montebello, California.

TIME: Halloween night.

CHARACTERS

CANDELA	late 40s, the mother of four children
JOSE	late 20s, the oldest son
ROSARIO	late 20s, the oldest daughter
GLORIA	early 20s, the youngest daughter
JESUS	early 20s, the youngest son
FERNANDO	late 20s, Jesus' Anglo lover
RUBEN	early 50's, Candela's deceased husband
SARA	late 50s, Candela's comadre (friend)

AT RISE: The stage is dark. Lights fade in a little to reveal the figure of a WOMAN wearing a black shawl over her head, we cannot see her face. The WOMAN enters from the offstage kitchen carrying a plate with food. She places the plate on a small altar. She lights the candles on the bottom of the altar, and more light reveals that it is an altar in memory of her dead husband RUBEN. The altar contains a black and white portrait of him as well as personal belongings and other religious ornaments. The WOMAN kneels and begins to



pray. She then does the sign of the cross and says "Amen." The lights fade in fully and the WOMAN takes off her shawl. She is CANDELA. She adjusts her sexy dress and looks at her watch. She walks toward the table and begins to set it. CANDELA places six plates then she stops to look at the sixth plate. She retrieves it, and a few seconds later puts it back. CANDELA looks at her watch again then goes to the mirror and looks at herself. She exercises her mouth and says the vowels out loud.

CANDELA. The rain in Spain falls mainly on the plain. Hello. How do you do? I'm fine, thank you. You like my dress? Yes. It's from the Jacklyn Smith Collection. *(The doorbell rings. She runs to the door and opens it.)*

KIDS *(offstage)*. Trick-or-treat!!!!

CANDELA. ¡Ayyy! *(She gets a bowl of candy next to the door and distributes it.)* Oh, how cute! Here's for you. A nice chocolate bar. And for you... What are you supposed to be? *(Awaits an answer.)* A giant condom?! Oh, well, here's for you... What? You don't want it?... You want a chocolate bar just like your little brother? All right... *(She gives him a chocolate. She gets more candy and is about to give it away.)* You want a chocolate too just like your best friend? But I don't have any more chocolate bars... I don't... No, I'm not lying... Your costume is just as cute... Look. *(She sticks out the bowl to show him. The KIDS begin to pull on the bowl.)* I can't give you all the candy! *(They continue to pull on the bowl until all the candy flies out from her bowl and hits her face. She kicks the door shut.)* ¡Dios mio, que esquinclés! *(CANDELA picks up the candy. She goes to the mirror and straightens herself. The doorbell rings again. She rushes to the door excitedly.)*

KIDS. Trick-or-treat!!!!!! *(CANDELA grabs the bowl of candy and tosses it out the door.)*

CANDELA. ¡Bolo! *(CANDELA shuts the door. She goes offstage to the kitchen to check on the food. The doorbell rings. She runs again, but then she looks at the empty bowl.)* Who is it?

JOSE *(off)*. Jose!

(CANDELA quickly opens the door to JOSE.)

JOSE. ¡Madre!

CANDELA. ¡Hijo! *(They hug and kiss on both cheeks.)* Come in. Come in. Estas tu casa.

JOSE. Oh, the food smells great! *(He heads for the kitchen.)*

CANDELA. Of course. I made it.



JOSE (*stops and notices the altar*). And that?

CANDELA. It's a little altar for your Papá...I got so embarrassed putting it around his grave, especially with all the food I cooked for him. So I brought it here. There was this nosy gringa who asked me when Ruben was going to come out from the world beyond to eat dinner. I told her, "The same time your dead husband comes to smell your flowers." I shut her up. But I thought it would look better here at least for tonight.

JOSE. You used to put it by his grave? I never knew that.

CANDELA. Yes. I've been doing it for eight years. This is my ninth year and my last. Tonight will be the end of my novenario. Because I am going to say good-bye to Ruben and hello to the new me!

JOSE. So what's for dinner?

CANDELA. It seems the only thing the men in this family ever think about is food.

JOSE. I'm sorry, Amá. I'm really excited for you, that you're experiencing your freedom and all that, I'm all for it. I mean it. I'm modern, I understand. It's just that I haven't had a decent meal for months. My wife can't cook for beans. I wish she'd quit her job at the clinic and stay home so that she can learn how to cook like you.

CANDELA. So where are Martha and the boys? Why didn't you bring them?

JOSE. Ah...They're fine. I told them it was a small, private family dinner...

CANDELA. And Martha didn't mind? Oh, it's all right. They can come. Let me go call them and invite them over. I haven't seen my grandchildren since...
(CANDELA *walks to the phone*.)

JOSE. No!...Don't call them. They're not home...Martha took the kids trick-or-treating by now.

CANDELA. That's too bad.

JOSE. It's all right. The boys wanted to go trick-or-treating instead. Amá, I want this night to be special for you.

CANDELA. So do I...Except...

JOSE. What?

CANDELA. Do you think Jesus is coming?

JOSE. Amá, he left...I'm sort of hoping he won't come. All he'll do is get you



upset.

CANDELA. Bueno, come to the kitchen with me and I'll give you a probadita of my tamales. (*They walk toward the kitchen, then the doorbell rings.*) I'll be right there.

(*CANDELA opens the door. Her two daughters, ROSARIO, very much a Huppy, (Hispanic Young Urban Professional) and GLORIA, very mellow and somewhat of a hippie, enter.*)

ROSARIO. ¡Amá! How nice you look! You look like you could be my sister.

CANDELA. ¿De veras? Oh, flattery will get you anywhere with me. (*GLORIA and CANDELA hug and kiss on both cheeks.*)

GLORIA. Ma, you look so beautiful and thin. And you're wearing make-up!

CANDELA. Sí, I became good friends with the Avon lady.

ROSARIO. What have you done to the house? It looks so different. It looks so, so, clean. Don't you think so, Gloria?

CANDELA. I've been doing repairs on it myself. And it's clean because there's no one here to make a mess... Pero diganme, how are both of you doing? Gloria how is UCLA?

GLORIA. School's fine. 'Cept I've got this totally uncool professor who doesn't understand why I want to be a Transcendental Psychologist. And it's a drag living in the dorms. Ma, I need to get my own space.

CANDELA. But can you afford it?

GLORIA. I could if I got a roommate...

ROSARIO. I just started working at this firm owned by Elizabeth Taylor's divorce lawyer. It's a big deal to be working for them.

CANDELA. What exactly do you do?

ROSARIO. Amá, I've told you, I'm a divorce lawyer.

CANDELA. They have specialized lawyers for that?

ROSARIO. Oh, yes! There is a large demand for divorce lawyers. I handle the divorces for our Hispanic clients. It's an advantage to speak Spanish where I work. It's too bad people don't think before they get married. Too bad for them, but good for me. But it is emotionally draining. Especially when there are kids involved. Poor children get separated... (*She gets over-emotional.*) But I'm making big bucks, oh, yeah. Those seven years of college are really starting



to pay off. (*The doorbell rings. "Trick-or-Treat" is heard outside.*)

CANDELA. Bueno, bueno, pasense.

GLORIA. Wo, Ma! What's that?

CANDELA. It's an altar for your Papá.

(*CANDELA goes to answer the door. ROSARIO and GLORIA take off their jackets and make themselves at home. JOSE comes out of the kitchen and they all catch up on the latest.*)

VOICES. Trick-or-treat!!!

CANDELA. I'm sorry! No more candy!

VOICES. Trick-or-treat!!!

CANDELA. No candy!

VOICES. No candy?!

JESUS (*offstage*). ¡Mamá!

CANDELA. Jesus, is that you?!!

(*JESUS hugs CANDELA and kisses her on both cheeks. Immediately after they finish kissing, FERNANDO enters.*)

CANDELA. Jesus, who is this?

JESUS. Mamá, this is my best friend Fernando.

CANDELA. Your best friend? Oh. Nice to meet you, Fernando. Mi casa es su casa.

FERNANDO. What did you say?

CANDELA. Mi casa es su... You don't speak Spanish?

FERNANDO. No, I'm afraid I'm American and only know one language. But Jesse is teaching me some Spanish... "Muchas gracias," "mucho gusto," "mucho macho." (*They laugh.*)

CANDELA. Well, make yourself at home.

FERNANDO. Gracias.

CANDELA. Everyone, look who is here!

ALL. Jesus!! (*CANDELA exits to the kitchen. GLORIA runs up to JESUS. They hug.*)



GLORIA. What a surprise! What a trip to see my little brother. I was so worried about you. I didn't think you would show up.

JESUS. I wouldn't miss it for anything...Everyone, I want you to meet my best friend Fernando.

GLORIA. Your best friend? Oh, right. It's a real pleasure to meet you, Fernando. Welcome to our family gathering.

FERNANDO. Gracias.

ROSARIO. So, Jesus, how was New York? Was it fun being a starving artist? Was it as romantic as you imagined it to be?

JESUS. Yes and no. It was very romantic, but I hate being poor. I've decided to come back to California. Maybe I'll go back to school and get a job like you, dear sister.

ROSARIO. You're finally coming to your senses, little brother...Did you all see my new BMW parked outside? I've only been out of college a year and...

JESUS. Was that your BMW outside? Oh, my God! I think one of the little trick-or-treaters was stealing your hub caps...

ROSARIO. Why, Jesus, didn't you know? BMWs don't have hub caps. *(ROSARIO walks away triumphantly)*. You haven't changed.

JESUS. Neither have you.

JOSE *(extending his hand)*. Hello, Jesus. I thought you had broken all ties with this family. You changed your mind. I wonder why.

JESUS. It's nice to see you again, big brother. Why do you think I came back?

JOSE. You ran out of money?

JESUS. You don't know me as well as you think.

JOSE *(whispering)*. Why did you bring your friend here? This is only for family. You know how much this means to Mamá.

JESUS. I know what I'm doing. Fernando is my friend.

(CANDELA enters from kitchen with food.)

CANDELA. Okay, everyone, take your seats at the table so we can begin our dinner. *(ALL sit around the table in their designated seats. FERNANDO is left standing, waiting to be seated.)* Oh, I'm sorry...*(CANDELA looks around for a chair.)* Ah...Sit...Sit, right over there.



JOSE. But that's Papá's chair.

FERNANDO (*to JESUS*). I thought your father was dead?

JESUS. He is.

FERNANDO (*suddenly realizing*). Oh, oh, oh. Forgive me. Ah...I'll just sit over here close to Jesse...

JOSE. Jesse? You mean Jesus?

CANDELA. No. You can sit there. It's fine. You're our guest.

FERNANDO. I don't want to interfere...

JOSE (*muttering*). You already have.

CANDELA. No. I insist. I don't want you to think that Mexicans are unfriendly people.

FERNANDO. Oh, I understand, but I really don't want to get in the way of any primitive rituals you're about to perform.

ROSARIO. Primitive rituals?

CANDELA. No problem. I insist.

FERNANDO. Only if it's no problem.

CANDELA. Sit down! (*FERNANDO falls into a chair.*) Let's begin.

GLORIA. I'm so glad that we're all here together. I've been so busy with my studies that I have not even called.

CANDELA. I've been busy with my studies too. I missed you all. This house is too big for me. I think it's haunted. Sometimes at night I swear I can hear everybody's voice. It's as if the walls have absorbed each one of you and I hear all the laughter and the crying...And sometimes I can hear your father's voice. (*ALL look toward the altar.*)

FERNANDO. Spooky! Maybe you should move.

CANDELA. Oh, no. This house is finally mine. I just made the last payment on the house last week.

ROSARIO. That's great, Amá. Maybe you can sell it and move to a better neighborhood.

CANDELA. But all of my comadres live around here.

FERNANDO (*notices the altar*). What is that?



CANDELA. Oh, don't you know?

FERNANDO. Well, it sort of looks like an Aztec pyramid or something, pardon my ignorance...Ahh, it's an altar!

CANDELA. It's a Mexican custom for the "Day of the Dead."

FERNANDO. How curious!

JOSE. Amá, let's begin.

CANDELA. Who wants to say the prayer?

JESUS. Mamá, you say it, como siempre.

CANDELA. All right...*(They bow their heads, except for FERNANDO. CANDELA is about to begin. She notices FERNANDO.)* Is something wrong?

FERNANDO. Oh, please go right ahead. Don't mind me.

ROSARIO. You don't believe in prayer?

GLORIA. What religion do you practice?

JOSE. Are you an atheist?

FERNANDO. No. I'm agnostic...Please. I don't want to keep interfering. Go right ahead.

CANDELA. Bueno. *(She bows her head to begin prayer.)* Padre nuestro que estás en los cielos te damos las gracias por ésta comida... *(JESUS coughs, hinting for her to continue in English.)* Ah...And we ask that you bless this food that we are about to eat...*(JOSE coughs hinting for her to continue in Spanish.)* Tambien te pidemos que nos cuides de todo lo malo y de la tentacion... *(JESUS coughs again.)* Please take care of my husband wherever he may be. Forgive us for our sins...*(JOSE coughs again.)* Tambien te damos las gracias por darnos la salud para poder estar aquí como una familia...*(JESUS coughs.)* Please give us peace...*(JOSE coughs.)*...y armonia. *(GLORIA coughs to show her disapproval of JOSE's cough.)* Give us...*(Pretty soon everyone is coughing, even FERNANDO. They fade out CANDELA' praying. She finally gives up.)* ¡Amen! *(They stop coughing and try to continue as if nothing happened.)*

JOSE. Let's eat. I'm hungry.

ROSARIO. What did you make for us?

CANDELA. You know, the usual.

ROSARIO. I'm so hungry I could eat my briefcase. I miss your cooking so much, Amá. Where I live you can only get tortillas in the frozen section.



CANDELA. You really like my food?

JOSE. I love it! It's greasy and salty, and very bad for you. Can we eat now?!
(He doesn't wait to be served.)

GLORIA. Ma, you should open a Mexican restaurant.

CANDELA. You really think so?

FERNANDO. Definitely! You should open it in New York. There are so many yuppies making a big fuss over the pseudo-Mexican restaurants.

JOSE. I especially like your tamales.

GLORIA. Did you make any sugar ones with raisins?

FERNANDO. What are ta-ma-les? *(ALL stop for a second and stare at him.)*

ROSARIO. You don't know what tamales are?

CANDELA. Pues denlo uno, give him one.

GLORIA. Jesus has never taken you to a Mexican restaurant?

FERNANDO. I'm afraid I've been an ignorant American for so many years...

JESUS. Don't be so hard on yourself.

FERNANDO. Yes, I have been, but I'm trying not to be... That's why I'm so happy I met Jesse... *(They pass the tamales to ROSARIO. She serves him one. All eyes are on him, awaiting his reaction.)* Oh, no.

ALL. What?!

FERNANDO. It has meat in it.

GLORIA. You're a vegetarian?

FERNANDO. Yes.

CANDELA. There are some sugar tamales. Aver dale otro. How about some Spanish rice or beans?

JOSE. You do know what beans are, don't you?

FERNANDO. Of course. Jesse shared a burrito with me one day...

JOSE. So, Mamá, you look so nice and young.

FERNANDO. Yes. She looks so young and sexy.

JOSE. She's not sexy! She looks beautiful, for an older woman.



CANDELA. Ayyy, thank you. I've been buying a lot of nice make-up and learning how to put it on. My comadre Sara started working for Avon. She's been so nice to me and she is trying to convince me to work for Avon. But I want to continue going to community college. Did you notice that I don't have such a thick accent anymore? (*ALL laugh quietly, being that her accent is pretty thick even with the improvement.*) I have a very good speech class.

FERNANDO. That's excellent that you have gone back to school and continued your education. You're still young, you can start a new life. You could even remarry.

JOSE. Of course not! My mother is not interested in remarrying.

CANDELA. I don't know about that. Maybe. It gets kind of lonely...

ROSARIO. ¡Amá!

CANDELA. Who knows, I might...I've been so lonely without Ruben and it's taken a lot of courage and strength to go on living alone.

FERNANDO. I bow my head to you. (*He begins to clap for CANDELA, they ALL join him.*)

JESUS. Yes, Mamá, we're so proud of you!

CANDELA. Thank you! But enough about me. Jesus, you've been so quiet. I want to know how New York was. I want to know everything.

JESUS. Everything?

CANDELA. Did you go to the art school after all?

JESUS. Yes, but I've decided not to continue.

GLORIA. Why not?

CANDELA. Is it because of money?

JESUS. No...I just haven't been able to do any artwork. When I first got to New York I was full of inspiration and was working on many projects. I began to take photographs of New York City, the buildings, the people. I couldn't believe I was there. There are so many people with diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and lifestyles. So many people living together in one city, sometimes in peace, sometimes not. Each day I met and took a picture of a different person. And one day I took a picture of myself...

JOSE. Do we have to listen to this?

ROSARIO. Gloria, can you pass me the rice?



GLORIA (*passes the rice to her*). And what happened, Jesus?

JESUS. I developed the photograph, but I wasn't on the picture.

JOSE. What do you mean, you weren't there? Maybe you just took it the wrong way.

CANDELA. Really, Jesus? That happened to me too. After Ruben died I swear I looked into the mirror to brush my hair and I couldn't see myself.

ROSARIO. So, Gloria, what classes are you taking?

GLORIA. Clinical psychology, Abnormal psychology, Developmental psychology... So, Fernando, is this your first time in California?

FERNANDO. Yes, it is.

CANDELA. So what do you think about Los Angeles?

FERNANDO. People are very friendly here.

ROSARIO. As opposed to New York?

FERNANDO. No. They're just more easy-going. But it's such a big city and it seems so segregated.

JOSE. And what's wrong with that?

FERNANDO. People here don't have to mix with other people unlike themselves and they're not exposed to other ways of living...

JOSE. I think it's fine the way it is. If you want to live with the Asians you live in Monterey Park. If you want to live with the blacks, you go to Compton. And if you want to be around gays, you go to West Hollywood. If you want to be around us, you stay in East L.A. (*GLORIA and ROSARIO quickly try to change the conversation. GLORIA distracts FERNANDO and ROSARIO distracts JOSE. They begin separate conversations which are not heard, but seen during CANDELA's conversation with JESUS.*)

JESUS. Something was missing. I couldn't paint because my paintings reflect who I am. And I had left half of me behind.

CANDELA. His death took all of me because there was no one left except an old woman who couldn't take care of herself.

JESUS. I came back for you Mamá, not for Jose, or Rosario, maybe for Gloria, but I must come to terms with you or I am blocked.

CANDELA. I need to say good-bye to Ruben.



JESUS. I met Fernando at school. He inspires me. He's more than my best friend. He is someone who knows me. I respect him, even admire...

CANDELA. I've been learning a lot about myself in my sociology class and I want to understand. I've grown so much. I am a reflection of my growth.

JESUS. And so am I!

CANDELA. And I have come to love myself.

JESUS. And I love Fernando.

ALL. What?!

JESUS. Mamá, Jose, Rosario, Gloria, and Papá. Wherever the hell he may be. Fernando and I are lovers. (*CANDELA is shocked and tries to hold back the tears. JOSE chokes on his tamale, ROSARIO is disgusted, and GLORIA is excited.*)

CANDELA. ¿Pero cómo puede ser?

JOSE (*to FERNANDO*). I knew there was something about you I didn't like. You're gay!

GLORIA. Finally!

ROSARIO. But that's...Yuuuckkk!!!

JESUS. Fernando, I love you.

(Lightning strikes in the living room, and all the lights go out except for the candles on and around the altar. RUBEN's portrait glows. From the bottom of the altar the candles spit fire and the ground opens up. Loud Mexican music comes from the hole, then RUBEN crawls out of the hole. He is wearing a red Mariachi suit, tail and horns, trumpet included. He plays the trumpet announcing himself. On his leg are chains made out of large, red, chile peppers. Before he can finish his trumpet solo a skeleton pulls on his leg trying to drag him back to hell. RUBEN pulls his leg, kicks the skeleton, then finally throws the trumpet and hits the skeleton on the skull. The skeleton falls back to hell.)

CANDELA. Ruben!!!

JOSE. ¡Papá!

FERNANDO. ¡Mucho Macho!

ROSARIO. Papá, is that you?

RUBEN. The one and only! I'm back!! (*CANDELA runs toward him in excitement. She tries to hug him but quickly moves away from his burning body.*)



Photo by Josefina Lopez

Ruben, Candela's dead husband, loses his temper.

Conceitedly:) Candela, keep a distance. I'm too hot to touch.

GLORIA. Wo! ¡Pa! Like, you're dead!

RUBEN. Only my body, but my spirit is still alive in this house. I always told my compadres that if one of my sons ever turned out to be a homo... That! I'd rather die than live with the shame. But since I'm already dead I had to come back and stop this cochinado! Candela, is this what you have allowed our son to become? A maricón!!!

CANDELA. I had no idea, Ruben!

JESUS. I knew you would all react this way, but I came because I didn't want to hide it from you anymore. I came hoping that just maybe you would understand and accept me. Fernando and I are leaving now. Even though you may not like who I am, I'm happy. *(JESUS and FERNANDO walk towards the door. RUBEN flips his wrist and the door locks.)*

FERNANDO *(trying the door knob)*. It's locked!

RUBEN. You're not getting out of here yet. You'll either come out of here a complete man, or a woman.

MEN *(quickly shield their crotch)*. Oooooohhhhh!!!!!!!

RUBEN. Get away from the door! I've got you locked in. *(RUBEN goes to the*



door. FERNANDO and JESUS move away from it. The doorbell rings.)

KIDS. Trick-or-treat! (*Doorbell rings again.*)

FERNANDO & JESUS. Help!!!!

KIDS. Trick-or-treat!! (*Doorbell rings again.*)

RUBEN. Shut up! (*Doorbell rings once again.*) I'll give them a treat, all right! (*RUBEN opens the door and steps outside. Offstage he transforms into a monster and scares the little KIDS, who scream and run away. RUBEN comes back in holding a small Burger King paper crown on his head and a handful of candy.*) Candy anyone?

JESUS. What are you going to do with us?!

RUBEN. I'm going to beat the maricón out of you! (*He is about to strike JESUS, but he begins to smell the food from the table and he slowly backs away from JESUS.*) Candela, what's for dinner?

CANDELA. Tamales, arroz, frijoles fritos...

GLORIA. Didn't they feed you in hell?

RUBEN. Yes, but in hell all the Mexican restaurants are full. I'm starving!... I'll beat it out of you right after I eat dinner, so don't go away. Ha, ha, ha, ha!!! (*He notices the altar.*) For me? Thank you, Candela, for worshipping me all these years. ¡Todavía soi el rey de esta casa! Candela, be a good wife and go fetch me some more food. I want my food hot, I think the food on this table is already cold.

GLORIA. Can't you heat it up yourself with your little finger?! Don't you have a special magic trick to do it?

RUBEN. I probably do, but I want Candela to heat it up for me. Andele mi Candelita, sea bonita and run to the kitchen to get my tortillitas.

CANDELA (*complying*). All right, Ruben. Anything you say. I'm happy you're back. I don't know how to deal with this kind of family problem. (*CANDELA starts for the kitchen like a submissive servant, anxious to please.*)

ROSARIO. Don't go to the kitchen! Don't let him boss you the way he always did. You're not married to him anymore. He's dead!

CANDELA. But your father is hungry from his trip from hell. (*Exits.*)

GLORIA. So! Let him starve. Don't let him tell you what to do!

RUBEN. ¿Qué paso hijas? Aren't you happy to see me? What's wrong? You're



not married yet? Is this what has become of my sweet daughters...Come, let's all sit around the table and continue with dinner.

JESUS (*telling FERNANDO*). That's an order.

RUBEN. Hey, everyone, smile! Aren't you happy to see me?

JOSE. I am, ¡Papá! I got married and I have three sons!

RUBEN. ¡Que macho! And you, Rosario? Are you married yet?

ROSARIO. No. I'm a divorce lawyer and I'm too busy...

RUBEN. You better hurry. You're almost thirty and not very pretty.

GLORIA. So how did you do it, to come from the world beyond? Do you have some sort of pass? When does it expire?

RUBEN. And you? Have you gotten married yet?

GLORIA. I'm only twenty-one.

RUBEN. Yes, but you're getting fat.

GLORIA. I haven't gotten married because I don't want to get stuck with a macho. I'm going to marry a modern man.

RUBEN. You'll probably have to support him.

GLORIA. I'd rather support him than have him beat me.

RUBEN. Shut up!

JOSE. So, Papá, what did you do in hell?

RUBEN. Watched reruns...of my life...Candela, ¡apurate con la comida! Don't forget the hot salsa. And bring some tequila while you're at it.

(*CANDELA enters carrying a lot of plates.*)

CANDELA. There is no tequila. I have no liquor in this house.

RUBEN. No liquor? Hmmm. So how have you been without me? Tonight you and I are going to celebrate. You can bet our bed is going to be on fire tonight...Fire. Get it? Laugh! (*They all make forced laughter and stop at the same time.*)

CANDELA. I've been wonderful. I made the last payment on the house last week. I'm going to community college...

RUBEN. Are you wearing make-up?



CANDELA. Yes, do you like it?

RUBEN. I've told you never to wear make-up. Women who wear make-up look cheap. You're my wife and a mother.

CANDELA. I'm studying English. I can speak on the phone and order merchandise with my credit card and not get nervous. I got an American Express a month ago. I remember when I used to think that an American Express was a "Greencard"...

RUBEN. You got an American Express? I guess they're giving them to anybody now.

CANDELA. I lost twenty pounds and I fixed up the house. I went to the library and read my first American novel.

RUBEN. This food tastes like shit. What did you put in it? Shit?

CANDELA. I went to my first play. I saw *A Doll's House*. I wore a tight dress without a bra.

RUBEN. Candela, stop talking all that nonsense and get my tortillas!

CANDELA. Aren't you happy for me?

RUBEN. Yeah, yeah, but I'm starving! *(He eats, barely chewing, gulping his food. Everyone is disgusted watching him.)*

CANDELA. Why is it that every time I tried to talk to you, you were always too hungry to listen to me? You eat too much. Your arteries are going to clog up and you're going to have a heart attack!

RUBEN. Candela, I did and I died, so shut up!

CANDELA. You did? I never knew how. Nobody told me. They just kept saying I didn't want to know. What happened? How exactly did you die?

JESUS. Yes, Papá, tell her! Prove to us just how macho you are!

RUBEN. Ahh....

CANDELA. What does he mean?

FERNANDO. Jesse, what did your father do? And why did he end up in hell?

RUBEN. None of your business!

ROSARIO. That's right, why are you in hell?

RUBEN. Ahhh...*(They corner him.)*



JOSE. What happened?

GLORIA. What are you hiding?

RUBEN. Nothing!

CANDELA. Tell me, Ruben!

ALL. Tell us! Tell us! (*The doorbell rings.*) Who the hell is it?!!

WOMAN (*offstage*). The Avon lady! (*Pause.*)

CANDELA. No! My comadre Sara!

SARA (*offstage*). Candela, I've got something to show you!

CANDELA. I can't let her in! She's such a chismosa!

RUBEN (*runs to the door*). Sara!

(*He quickly opens the door to SARA.*)

RUBEN. Hello. Come in. Welcome.

SARA. Hello... Who are you?

RUBEN. I'm Ruben—Rubento. Candela's younger brother.

SARA. I didn't know she had a younger brother.

RUBEN. Yes, you see I come from another world, I mean country. I'm from Mexico. We got separated when we were very young, and come in...

SARA. Thank you... Hello, Candela... I'm interrupting! That's right. I forgot your family reunion. I'm sorry. I'll come back another time. I'll leave you my little book.

CANDELA. Sí, sí, please.

RUBEN. No. You're not interrupting anything. Please stay and join us for dinner and have some tamales. Have you ever tried Candela's tamales? They're delicious. (*He holds SARA by the arm and pulls her to the table.*)

SARA. You know, you look familiar.

RUBEN. I do?

SARA. You look like Candela's husband.

RUBEN. I do?

SARA. But you couldn't be, he's dead. (*ALL laugh in relief.*) How come you're



dressed like that?

RUBEN. Ah...Ah...

FERNANDO. Halloween!

RUBEN. Yeah! Please have something to eat.

SARA. I just came to show Candela a new type of make-up that arrived today.

CANDELA. I would like to see it, but not now.

RUBEN. Candela, don't be rude. She's our guest. Andale, Sara, show us your stuff.

SARA. I need some room on the table to put my suitcase.

RUBEN. Candela, clear the table...*(They clear the table quickly. SARA places her suitcase on the table and opens it.)*

SARA. It's called Lucifermagic. It's great to cover up black eyes, scars, scratches, cuts on the face. It's selling like hotcakes. Women in East L.A. are placing large orders. It's in demand. Let me show you. *(SARA applies the make-up all over her face. ALL watch silently as she applies it and suddenly she transforms into a monster from beyond.)*

MONSTER/SARA. I've come back to get you, Ruben!

FERNANDO. It's the devil! *(ALL scatter. CANDELA gets a cross from the altar. The others also get one or make one with their fingers.)*

GLORIA *(with her fingers crossed)*. ¡Cruz!, ¡Cruz!

RUBEN. Candela, don't let it take me! *(CANDELA attacks the devil fearlessly with the cross.)*

DEVIL/SARA. Coward! Coward!

RUBEN. I'm not a coward!

DEVIL/SARA. Then why did you escape? You couldn't stand the reruns of your life and watching all the pain you caused those that love you! Coward! *(They keep pushing the DEVIL away. Finally CANDELA pushes the DEVIL back into the pit. They throw their crosses in.)*

RUBEN. Thank you, Candela!

CANDELA. Only I have the power to save you, isn't it true, Ruben? It's because of me that you're still here.

RUBEN. Which only proves that after all these years you still need me and



Photo by Josefina Lopez

Ruben, Candela's dead husband, loses his temper.

love me.

CANDELA. I think the only reason I saved you is because I want to know how you died.

RUBEN. I can't tell you. I don't want to tell you. It's been nine years!

CANDELA. Then don't you think I've waited long enough?

RUBEN. I'm ashamed.

JESUS. Ashamed? Is that part of your macho vocabulary.

RUBEN. All right...I had a heart attack...during orgasm... while having sex with your cousin Ramón. (*ALL gasp.*)

ALL. Ramón!!!! (*Then they ALL burst into laughter, except for CANDELA.*)

CANDELA. You see this altar? I made it for you. Every year since your death I've been taking food to your grave. I've been loyal, but you were never faithful. (*CANDELA tries to hold back her pain and anger. She goes to the altar and gets his photo and throws it at him. She grabs his shoes and pants from the altar and also throws them at him.*)

RUBEN. Please forgive me.



CANDELA. No...I can't go back to the way it used to be. You died and my life was shattered. The mirrors shattered because I couldn't see myself. I had no identity, no self, I didn't exist. I've been putting the pieces of this mirror back together. It's taken me more than seven years to recover, but now I like what I see...I like who I am. I love my life... without you... You didn't come back to try and stop Jesus, you came back to try and stop me. My independence threatens you. You want to continue dominating me, but I've come too far to let you stop me... And, as for Jesus, I can't reject him because if I am rejecting his sexual liberation then how can I feel justified in my own liberation? He is my son. And although I don't understand why he is gay, I'd rather live with the truth than deny what has always been there. Ruben, ¡yo soi la reina de esta casa! It's my house, I paid for it. The papers say so, and I say so! So, Ruben, you go to hell! (*CANDELA pushes him back into the pit. The pit closes and the smoke disappears. CANDELA collects herself.*) Good! Now let's finish eating. Eat as much as you like, because the next time I'll be charging you for it.

GLORIA. Why?

CANDELA. Because I think I might open that Mexican restaurant you were suggesting. I think I'll call it "La Reina de la Casa."

JESUS. Mamá, did you really mean what you told Papá about me?

CANDELA. Sí, hijo. I think I understand... I've taken a few psychology classes myself.

GLORIA. In that case, Ma, I think I should tell you that I'm moving into a commune with my boyfriend Siddhartha.

ROSARIO. Amá, I want to have a child and not get married. I am looking for a potential biological father to impregnate me.

JOSE (*about to cry*). Mamá, Martha wants to get a divorce from me and she wants to take the house!

ROSARIO. Does she need a lawyer?

FERNANDO. I think I'll try a raisin tamale.

CANDELA (*looks to God*). It's going to be hell being a new-age mother, but I'll try. (*Lights fade out.*)

The End



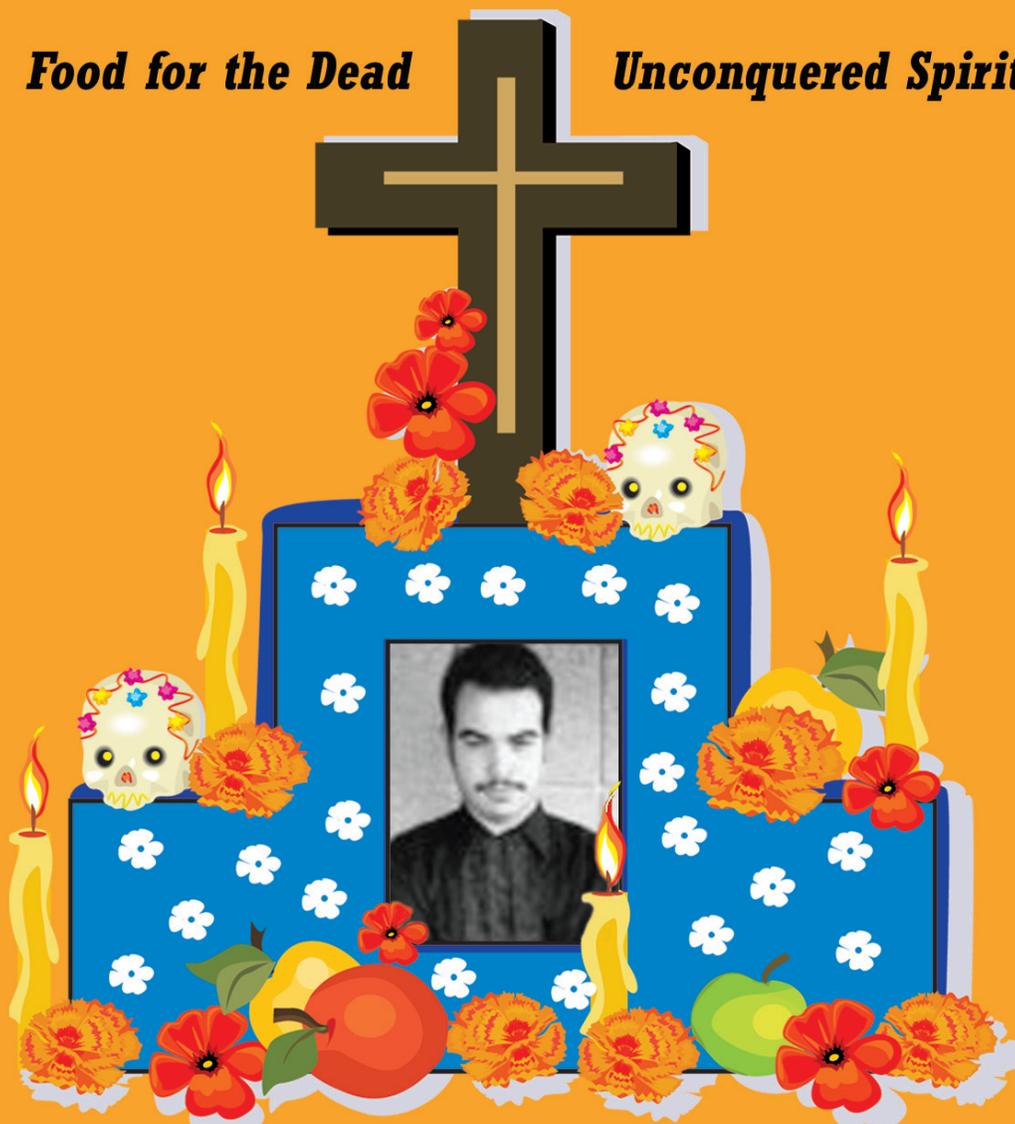
CASA 0101 is proud to present

A DAY OF THE DEAD CELEBRATION

with Two One Acts by Josefina Lopez:

Food for the Dead

Unconquered Spirit



November 5-21, 2010

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UNCONQUERED SPIRITS

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

“History should be looked at through everyone’s subjective experience,” said historian Jose López who spoke to a college group of Latino students who couldn’t agree whether to call themselves “Latin” or “Hispanic” Alliance. For me this was no longer an issue because I had resolved to call myself a Chicana. This was the first time I had heard a historian mention the importance of everyone’s experience in history, including women. He added, “We should see the conquest of Mexico, not as an invasion by Spain of Mexico, but as the rape of thousands of Native American women by Spanish men.” I was blown away because for the first time I felt the experience of women was being validated. “The same goes with slavery in the United States. We should look at the experience of all the enslaved women who were raped during this period of history,” he added. That day, I left school feeling empowered by this point of view and the overwhelming amount of facts and information that shattered so many myths about Columbus’ glorified “discovery of America.”

This excitement led me to do more research and in my investigation of the histories of Latin America and religion, I “discovered” a few things. I discovered history is always told through a man’s point of view. “His-story” is also always told by the winner. Women and their bodies have always been the battlefield on which personal and political wars (rape) are fought. Women represent a man’s most valued “possession,” therefore her body also represents the prize, thus making her the loser.

No matter who wins the battle, women will always lose (i.e. rape,



impregnation, or loss of children). And since she is always the “loser,” “her-story” is never told. History is therefore devoid of “her” experience, “her” point of view, and “her-story.” It’s as if all these men who have discovered, created, and destroyed, throughout history had no mother, (well maybe Hitler didn’t). Women are not included in history, are not given credit, and worst of all we are blamed for so many things. Interestingly, one man commands the dropping of atomic bombs on hundreds of thousands of human beings, but no one blames him or “malekind.” One woman kills her children or gives a man an apple to eat and women will never hear the end of it. When we look at history we must ask ourselves who is telling the story and why. I am telling this her-storical drama through my point of view, a feminist and Chicana’s point of view, in my attempt to pose a “What if...?”

A couple of years before I started calling myself a Chicana, I use to call myself “Hispanic,” (only because I had been to New York City and rather than let people refer to me as “Spanish,” I preferred to call myself “Hispanic”). I stopped calling myself Hispanic when it was pointed out to me that “Hispanic” only makes reference to the Spanish side of my mestizo heritage. I had never stopped to think about this before because all my life I took for granted that I had Spanish blood.

I was born with light features and this was always seen as something positive by my relatives. I never meant to be in “denial” about my identity, because I have always been proud of being Mexican, but I was ignorant about my indigenous heritage. I adopted the title of “Chicana” because I wanted to recognize the indigenous side of who I am. Even though, “Chicano” has a negative connotation, (“Chicanos are hippies who wear bandannas and start riots” according to my older sibling), by taking on this title I hope to dispel myths about Chicanos as being uneducated, angry, confused, and with a “chip on their shoulders.”

With this play I hope to give recognition to my “mother,” which is Mexico. I wrote this play for Mexico and for my great-great-great-... “grandmother” who was Aztec and was raped by the Spaniards. I am recognizing her and accepting her because she is just as important as my Spanish great-great-great-... “grandfather.” The Chicano was born out of rape and hatred. This play was born out of love and acceptance...and “What if...?”

Josefina Lopez
Los Angeles
April 28, 1995



UNCONQUERED SPIRITS

ACT ONE

CHARACTERS

JUANA late 30s, Xochimilco's mother. Tells Xochimilco the legend of La Llorona

XOCHIMILCO as a young girl. As a 10-year-old Mestiza, she has an enormous curiosity and a zest for life, curious, playful, and courageous

TONANTZIN the mother of the Aztec Gods

SOLDIER a Spanish soldier

FRAY BARTOLOME a kind man, who wishes to convert the natives to Christians

FRAY FRANCISCO an evil man who hates the natives

OLLIN an old native man

XOCHITL early 20s, a naive girl who wants to be baptized

TEXCOCO a young native who is part of the resistance movement

TIXOC one of the last Aztec priests

TLALOC an Aztec deity

PARTERA a mid-wife

LA LLORONA the crying woman spirit

XOCHIMILCO, as a grown woman, 35 years old. As a woman who looks older than her years, she is defeated, jaded, and angry

MALINA 10, Xochimilco's daughter



LOLA	late 30s, Xochimilco's co-worker and friend. Curious and courageous
PETRA	late 50s, Xochimilco's co-worker and friend
EMMA	21, an intelligent woman who is a communist
CHRIS	supervisor at the pecan factory, Xochimilco's lover
SERAFINA	a woman who performs abortions
PRIEST	He takes Xochimilco's last confession and punishes her for the abortion
ANGELS	Xochimilco's saviours and helpers
BAILIFF	he takes Malina away from Xochimilco

SCENE ONE: MEXICO, 1913

(The lights come on to a small wooden shack. The moon is full, illuminating the mountain peaks. C is a giant tree with several branches that stick out as though they were the arms of women reaching out of the tree. This tree is 500 years old and it stands firm, delicate as nature can be, but strong like a cannon or a phallus, erect towards heaven. The wind blows and whistles throughout the night. JUANA, looking older than her years, wearing an old dress and a dirty apron, comes out of the small shack. She takes off her apron and looks out to the tiny lake close by.)

JUANA. Xochimilco! Xochimilco! Get in here! ¡Ven aqui! ¡Ahorita! *(She waits for a response. She walks further D to the lake.)* Ya es tarde. It's late! You have to finish packing!

(XOCHIMILCO, 10 years old, enters.)

XOCHIMILCO *(enthusiastically)*. No! I don't want to go!

JUANA *(goes to XOCHIMILCO, pulling her by the ear)*. Go inside the house and pack your things. Stop being a little diablita, do what I say and be an angel, por favor.

XOCHIMILCO. But angels don't have any fun! *(XOCHIMILCO pulls away and runs from her. She covers her ears and challenges JUANA.)* Mamí, try catching me now!

JUANA. ¡Ayy, diabla! ¡Vas a verlo! When you have a daughter she's going to be just like you de traviesa, you'll see.

XOCHIMILCO *(whining)*. I already packed my bags... Can I go back down to the water?

JUANA. No, you're going to turn into a sirenita, or a little duck. *(JUANA*



catches XOCHIMILCO and tickles her tummy. They laugh.)

XOCHIMILCO. Are there lakes where we are going?

JUANA. Si. Your aunt tells me it's nice. And you'll have your cousins to play with. You'll like it over there.

XOCHIMILCO. Mamí, I don't want to leave. Why do we have to leave Mexico?

JUANA. Because there's nothing here for us.

XOCHIMILCO. What about my Papí? What if he returns from la revolucion and doesn't find us here?

JUANA. Xochimilco, get inside the house now and get ready for bed! Hasme caso.

XOCHIMILCO. No! I don't want to go!

JUANA. ¡Ahora si vas a verlo! If your father were here...! *(JUANA breaks out crying. XOCHIMILCO tries to hold back her own tears.)*

XOCHIMILCO. Mamí, my Papí isn't coming back, is he? *(JUANA stops crying unsure what to say.)* Is that why that letter you got last week made you cry so much? *(JUANA nods painfully. XOCHIMILCO tries to be strong for her mother.)* I'll be good. Don't cry, Mamíta. *(XOCHIMILCO comforts her mother.)* Mamíta, in my prayers I ask God to take care of my Papí...Mamí...Where is heaven?

JUANA. Up there?

XOCHIMILCO. Where is hell?

JUANA. Sometimes I think it's right here on earth. Xochi, mijita, for the last time, get inside the house and get ready, or...or...

XOCHIMILCO. Or what?

JUANA. Or...La Llorona will get you!

XOCHIMILCO. What? Who?

JUANA. La Llorona. I'm surprised you haven't seen her yet. *(JUANA sits down nonchalantly.)* La Llorona is the spirit of a woman all dressed in white who roams by the rivers of Mexico looking for her dead children who she killed a long time ago...An uncle of mine saw her many years ago when he was herding sheep one night. She came to him and asked him for water. He said she was very beautiful with long golden hair and a pale face. He asked



her what she was doing there so late and she simply said she usually walked by there at night. She thanked him for the water and walked away. From a distance she screamed “¡¡Ay mis hijos!!” and then disappeared.

XOCHIMILCO (*intrigued and scared*). Why did she kill her children?

JUANA. Are you sure you want to know? You might not want to go down to the lake after you hear the story...Let me see if I can remember it...A long time ago, there was a very beautiful Indian woman and a handsome Spaniard who fell in love. They loved each other very much and had children. Then he left her and went off to Spain to marry another woman. When he returned to Mexico the Indian woman went to a big ball and saw them dancing happily together. She was so angry that she went home and killed her children. She cut them into little pieces and threw them into a river. Then she killed herself. But when her spirit reached the gates of heaven, God would not let her in until she found her children. So her spirit roams the rivers of Mexico looking for her children, screaming, “¡¡Ayy mis hijos!! (*XOCHIMILCO, screams. JUANA laughs.*)

XOCHIMILCO. But how could she kill her children?

JUANA. She lost her mind, se volvió loca, and did it out of revenge.

XOCHIMILCO. Maybe it was an accident.

JUANA. No, she was a bad woman and a terrible mother... And when she sees little girls like you misbehaving she goes to their bed, pulls them out, and takes them away.

XOCHIMILCO. She won't take me, will she, Mamí?

JUANA. She will if you continue to disobey me. Así es que siguele. I'll tell her to come and get you. I'll even give you to her. Who needs a bad little girl? (*XOCHIMILCO starts crying.*) No, no, no te apures, I was just trying to scare you. Don't be scared, if you're a good girl, nothing's going to happen to you... All right, you can go down to the water for a little bit, if you still want to. Just remember, we have to wake up early to catch the train. (*JUANA kisses her on the forehead and leaves. XOCHIMILCO, who was pretending to be crying, quickly changes expressions. She is about to run back into the water when she stops to reconsider.*)

XOCHIMILCO. Ah...No, I think I'll just lie here, just in case La Llorona passes by...Not that I'm scared or anything... but it's getting late, it's cold...and I'm sleepy. (*She goes to her bed and lies down, and gets ready to go to sleep. She starts praying.*) Padre nuestro que estás en los cielos, forgive me because I am not on my knees, but I don't want La Llorona to get me...God, if you can really



hear me, please take care of my Papí. I know he is in heaven with the angelitos. God, please take care of my Mamíta and me... Amen. (*XOCHIMILCO does the sign of the cross and goes to sleep. Lights fade out slowly.*)



Photo by Josefina Lopez

La Llorona appears to Xochimilco

SCENE TWO: TENOCHTITLÁN, 1521

(TONANTZIN, the Aztec Goddess of the earth, screams from the very top of the Pyramid of the Sun as Tenochtitlán is being destroyed. The shadows of fire are seen. All around her is chaos.)

TONANTZIN. ¡¡Ayy mis hijos!! Look how they are destroying Tenochtitlán! Look how the flowers are dying. ¡¡Ayy mis hijos!!

(TWO SPANISH SOLDIERS capture TONANTZIN and tie her to a cross. The pyramid is quickly transformed into a Mission. They place the cross on the top of what used to be the Pyramid of the Sun to establish the new reign. As the lights fade out we hear the following along with angelic music.)

BISHOP (*voice-over*). The true and universal God, our Lord, Creator and dispenser of being and life, as we have been telling you in our sermons, has a character different from that of your Gods. He does not deceive; He lies not;



He hates no one, despises no one. There is nothing evil in Him. He is perfectly good. He is the essence of love, compassion, and mercy. And He showed his infinite mercy when He made Himself man here on earth like us; humble and poor, like us. He is eternal, He created heaven and earth and hell. He created us, all the men in the world, and He also created the devils whom you hold to be Gods and whom you call Gods, and who did not support you in the slightest, while the true and omnipotent God has allowed his faithful servants, the Spaniards, to conquer Mexico...

SCENE THREE: (MEXICO), NEW SPAIN, 1559

(The angelic voices of a Native American children's choir bring peace to the horror of the destruction and genocide of the Natives of Tenochtitlán.)

Lights fade in.

Several years later, in the same Mission, a group of Native Americans listen to a sermon on their knees. Some of them have difficulty staying on their knees for so long. A SPANISH SOLDIER comes by and whips their backs so they will sit up.)

BISHOP. This true God is everywhere. He has his Kingdom, which He began in the beginning of the world. He would have you enter it now, and for this you should consider yourselves blessed. *(The BISHOP finishes his sermon.)* You may stand.

(The BISHOP leaves. Two friars, FRAY BARTOLOME and FRAY FRANCISCO take over.)

FRAY BARTOLOME. Tomorrow you will be baptized. We know that our training was done quickly, but there is urgency to save your souls. Be ready to recite and know the credo, Our Holy Father, the ten commandments, the immortality of the soul, original sin, heaven and hell, what are good and bad angels, and Lucifer's descent from heaven. To make sure you are prepared we are going to test you. Who would like to be first?

(No one volunteers. FRAY BARTOLOME looks around. He stares at an OLLIN, an older Native American man who is very shy.)

FRAY BARTOLOME. You. Come here. I want you to recite the credo.

OLLIN *(comes forward)*. Yo creo en Dios, todo poderoso, creador de los cielos y de la tierra. *(OLLIN forgets the rest of the prayer.)*

FRAY FRANCISCO. Yes...Continue...

OLLIN. Ah...Ah...I forgot it.



FRAY FRANCISCO. Repeat after me...I believe in Jesus Christ his only son...

OLLIN. Yo creo en Jesus Cristo...

FRAY FRANCISCO. His only son...

OLLIN. Su unico hijo...

FRAY FRANCISCO. Our Lord, who was created...What is wrong with you?! Repeat it! (*OLLIN doesn't say anything.*) Are you so stupid! Can't you hear? (*OLLIN remains still. FRAY FRANCISCO loses his patience and is about to strike him when FRAY BARTOLOME stops him. He takes him aside.*)

FRAY BARTOLOME. Brother Francisco, we are here to save souls, not break bones...Patience, patience.

FRAY FRANCISCO. Why should we save their souls? They are savages, idiots! They are not human.

FRAY BARTOLOME. Think of them as children. They may lack the knowledge of the mind, but they can gain the knowledge of the soul. Could the gates of the Kingdom of God be closed to these simple souls, full of good will? No. That is why we are here. To educate them about human morality... Let me deal with him. (*FRAY BARTOLOME walks up to OLLIN.*) In order to enter the kingdom of God you must renounce your false Gods. Are you prepared to do that? (*OLLIN shakes his head "no."*) Then I am forced to show you what happens to those who do not renounce their false gods.

(The following ritual is a theatrical presentation by the FRIARS. They blow out the candles illuminating the Mission, and bring in the darkness. They light a huge fire and throw chickens and small animals into the flames. The Native Americans hear the animals howling and screeching and become very frightened.)

FRAY BARTOLOME. Where do you want your soul to end up? In there or in God's paradise?

OLLIN (*very scared*). In paradise.

FRAY BARTOLOME. Then you will learn your prayers. (*FRAY FRANCISCO and FRAY BARTOLOME turn off the fire and light the candles.*)

FRAY FRANCISCO. Recite for me the credo.

OLLIN. Yo creo en Dios todo poderoso, creador de todos los cielos y la tierra, y Jesus Cristo, su unico hijo...

(XOCHITL, a Native American woman, whispers the credo to OLLIN when he



forgets it.)

FRAY FRANCISCO. That's enough. I know that you will have it memorized by tomorrow.

FRAY BARTOLOME. Let this serve as an example to you. God is merciful, but He won't tolerate the adoration of false Gods... Tomorrow you will be baptized, your knowledge of our Lord and his Son will be tested. Be here at eight in the morning, ready, and in your best clothes... You can leave.

(The frightened Native Americans leave. XOCHITL is on her way out. FRAY BARTOLOME approaches her. TEX-COCO, one of the Native American, stops and listens to their conversation on the side.)

FRAY BARTOLOME. Xochitl, you are very special. Our Lord is very proud of your servitude and the commitment you show by helping others to better serve and understand our Lord.

XOCHITL *(embarrassed)*. It is nothing. I do it out of love for my Lord. I am only thankful that you are helping me and my people save our souls.

FRAY BARTOLOME. Your soul is worth saving, hija. Tomorrow will be a very special day for you. It will be the beginning of your membership into the house of God.

XOCHITL. I look forward to tomorrow. *(She walks away, shyly.)*

FRAY BARTOLOME. Don't forget that it is your turn to decorate the altar tomorrow.

XOCHITL. No, Padre. I am on my way right now to get the flowers.

FRAY BARTOLOME. Very good, hija. Then be with God. Adiós.

XOCHITL. Adiós. *(She kisses his hand and walks away. TEXCOCO casually follows her out. Lights fade out.)*

SCENE FOUR

(Lights fade in. In the background is a hill full of large stones. XOCHITL enters carrying two large baskets full of (calla-lilies) white flowers. She sits down on the ground to rest and catch her breath.)

XOCHITL. Dear Lord, all these souls that lie here, open your heaven to them. I will do your will so that their souls and maybe mine will be saved...

(TEXCOCO sneaks up behind her.)



Photo by Josefina Lopez

Texcoco comforts Xochil after her rape.

TEXCOCO. Don't pray so hard. Don't you know that God is deaf when it comes to our prayers?

XOCHITL. How can you talk that way? You're supposed to be ready for baptism tomorrow!

TEXCOCO. They're going to have to kill me before they baptize me.

XOCHITL. You don't mean that! I can help you. I can make you understand.

TEXCOCO. You act like such an angel, but don't you know angels aren't brown.

XOCHITL. I'm not trying to do anything, but serve my Lord.



TEXCOCO. Do you really believe them? They enslaved our people and treat us like animals. And yet they're supposed to serve a loving and compassionate God...If their God created all men, then we belong to Him, and we are brothers with the Spaniards, but why are we looked down on as though we weren't even human? Have you thought about this?

XOCHITL. I can only try to teach you what I know. The faith is up to you.

TEXCOCO. You can't answer me, can you?

XOCHITL. I am late, I have to go...Excuse me.

TEXCOCO. Hermana, have they stolen your soul already?

XOCHITL (*picks up the baskets and starts walking away*). See you tomorrow at the baptism...The Lord be with you, Hermano.

TEXCOCO (*runs after XOCHITL*). Stop praying to your false God. If He were so compassionate and loving He wouldn't have sent them here to kill all of our people and your parents. It is a lie that they are the servants of God. They didn't come to serve God, they came to serve themselves. They came to rob us of our gold, our land, our souls! Why are you believing their lies as the truth?

XOCHITL. Get away from me!

TEXCOCO. Hermana, I only tell you because I'm scared to lose you. They've already killed most of us by poisoning our bodies with their diseases. Now they are poisoning our souls by baptizing us into permanent slavery.

XOCHITL. Stop it! Stop it! Leave me alone! You're a demon! I know about you. You're a bad angel sent to test my faith. Get away, demon...Lord, give me strength...(*She starts praying "Our Heavenly Father."*)

TEXCOCO. Pray as much as you want, but I won't disappear, and now that I've entered your mind, this doubt will never leave you.

XOCHITL. I don't want to hear anymore! Stop confusing me! I'm supposed to be ready for my baptism.

TEXCOCO. Floresita, I didn't mean to be so cruel. I'll leave you alone. But ask yourself why this God would want us to live in fear of him and his servants. Why he would allow us to suffer this way? (*XOCHITL runs away from him. TEXCOCO watches her, disappointed. Lights fade out.*)



SCENE FIVE

(Lights fade in faintly. The Mission is lit up by only a few candles. XOCHITL enters. She proceeds to the altar and kneels in front of the statue of the crucifixion.)

XOCHITL. Dear Lord...Forgive me, but I have doubts. I don't understand...

(FRAY FRANCISCO enters.)

FRAY FRANCISCO. What is it you don't understand? *(He has frightened her.)*

XOCHITL. I'm embarrassed...I'm ashamed to admit it to you.

FRAY FRANCISCO. Come here. I will listen. Whatever you can say to our Lord, you can say to me because I am his servant. *(XOCHITL walks toward him, shyly.)* Don't be scared. *(She walks closer to him.)* Now tell me. What do you have doubts about? *(He innocently puts his arm around her shoulder.)*

XOCHITL *(hesitantly)*. If...If our Lord made all men...*(His arm slowly slides down to her waist.)*

FRAY FRANCISCO. Yes...

XOCHITL. And he created the Pope and our Emperor King Charles I, you and me...

FRAY FRANCISCO. And you are certainly a divine and beautiful creation.

XOCHITL *(shyly smiling)*. ...and my people...Then why...?

FRAY FRANCISCO. Why what? *(He pulls her closer to him. XOCHITL closes her eyes now.)*

XOCHITL. Then if we are all God's children, why would God let me and my people be enslaved and be treated like animals, and suffer this way?

FRAY FRANCISCO. It is because we are here to suffer. Only when we suffer do we prove to God how worthy we are of his paradise. Your people need to suffer, to repent for all of your sins, for all your human sacrifices and worship of false gods. Only after you have suffered on earth can you truly deserve to enter through the gates of heaven. Do you want to be saved? *(XOCHITL nods "yes" as she looks sadly to her feet.)* Then you must suffer. *(His hand is now between her legs, rubbing on her. XOCHITL holds back her tears. She passively and defenselessly awaits his other hand. He puts his hand in her blouse and she does nothing. Blackout.)*



SCENE SIX

(Lights fade in. There is a full moon. Clearly it has a face, that of a crying woman. XOCHITL runs in, barely able to stand up. She is crawling on the ground. She is silent for a few seconds, then she begins to whimper.)

XOCHITL. Dear God, I know you exist, because even after what has happened I still have the strength to love you. But dear God, what is your name? Is it Jesus or Tlaloc, or does it matter what your name is as long as you are mine and are above me and everywhere? I want you to love me as your child, but how can this be your will?

(TEXCOCO appears.)

TEXCOCO. Why do you cry, Floresita?

XOCHITL. You must be a demon! Because you only appear when I am praying.

TEXCOCO. It's because your crying can be heard all throughout Tenochtitlán and your tears even make the moon cry.

XOCHITL. I'm not crying!

TEXCOCO. Did you find the answer? Is that why you're crying?

XOCHITL. No!...

TEXCOCO. Are you still going to be baptized tomorrow?

XOCHITL *(gasping for air)*. What do you want from me? Leave me alone!

TEXCOCO. I can't... To see you cry that way makes me want to cry too... What is wrong? *(He tries to hold her, but she pushes him away.)*

XOCHITL. Nothing! There's nothing wrong with me!

TEXCOCO. Then you must be rejoicing because tomorrow you will be "saved." *(XOCHITL bursts out in more tears. She falls to the ground as if wanting to bury herself in the dirt. She claws the ground with rage.)*

XOCHITL. I want to die! *(TEXCOCO tries to lift her from the ground. She pulls herself down.)*

TEXCOCO. You can't die! Xochitl, you're not a coward.

XOCHITL. You don't know me, how can you say that?

TEXCOCO. Because you are my hermana. And our fathers and mothers were not cowards. The Spaniards would like us all to die and finally disappear so



they can do whatever they want with our land and gold, but we have to live. Our Gods gave us our will to live. (*XOCHITL lifts herself up. She takes his hand and sits up on a rock. She wipes her tears away and regains her strength.*)

XOCHITL. I asked Fray Francisco to tell me why...why... they treat us this way...and he...(*She cries.*) He told me I had to suffer...And he...he...(*She covers her face in shame.*) But I let him!! I didn't do anything. I didn't scream; I didn't run. I didn't fight! I laid on the ground, looking up to the cross. And I kept thinking that if...if I endured, that the Lord would love me more.

TEXCOCO (*hugs her*). I'm sorry...I'm sorry you had to find out that way, but will you still get baptized tomorrow?

XOCHITL. Do we have a choice?!

TEXCOCO. No, but we can do it our way.

XOCHITL. How?

TEXCOCO. Can I trust you? Will you feel this way tomorrow and always?

XOCHITL. Yes, I think so.

TEXCOCO. Come with me. I have to show you something.

XOCHITL. What is it? Where will you take me?

TEXCOCO. Trust me, Xochitl. (*He extends his hand out to her. She considers it carefully, then takes his hand. They walk towards the moon. Lights fade out.*)

SCENE SEVEN

(*TIXOC, one of the last Aztec priests, makes fire and lights up copal which he places on a small altar. He prays silently. TEXCOCO lights a candle. XOCHITL follows him.*)

TIXOC. Who's there?

TEXCOCO. It's me, Texcoco. (*Another candle is lit.*)

TIXOC. Who is she?

TEXCOCO. This is Xochitl.

TIXOC. Ah, good...You finally convinced her to come.

XOCHITL. Where are we?

TIXOC. You must first swear that you will never tell anyone what you see here



tonight or else you will put our lives in danger.

XOCHITL. I swear.

TIXOC. Do you swear not to tell even if you are tortured?

XOCHITL (*freezes in contemplation, then answers him*). I swear.

(*TIXOC leads them in the darkness. He reaches a spot and lights up a torch. The room, a temple, is illuminated. On the walls are murals depicting the ceremonies of the Aztecs as well as the different deities.*)

XOCHITL. What is this?

TIXOC. When the Spaniards came, they destroyed every temple and idol they could find. All the temples were destroyed, but this one was spared because it was built underground. But lake Texcoco is leaking through the cracks. (*TIXOC illuminates a mural that exemplifies the Fire Ceremony.*)

XOCHITL. What is this?

TIXOC. These are the murals illustrating the history of our ceremonies. This one is the Fire Ceremony.

XOCHITL. When did it happen?

TIXOC. You are too young to know about it because it only happens every fifty-two years. Our ancestors believed that a sacred period of time was fifty-two years and they held a New Fire Ceremony to mark the end of a cycle and the beginning of a new one. They would break all their pots, and start with new. They would start a new fire and relight the entire city after it was in darkness for days. The last time it happened was almost fifty-two years ago. (*TIXOC takes them further inside the temple. Visible are three large statues of Tlaloc, Quetzalcóatl, and Tonantzin. TIXOC lights up sticks of copal.*) After the destruction of Tenochtitlán we had to smuggle and store all the sacred idols and objects. It is a sacred place where we worship our God Tlaloc, Quetzalcóatl, God of Culture, and Tonantzintlalli, our mother earth. Do you see how those demons have come and disrespected and destroyed our mother earth? That is why our Gods have ordered us to rise up against the Spaniards. We have to continue our resistance if we are to survive. Xochitl, I have asked Texcoco to bring you here because you can help us with our resistance. (*TEXCOCO brings forth a small gold statue of Tlaloc. He presents the statue to her.*)

TEXCOCO. Tomorrow before the baptism, when you are decorating the altar, you will be the only one there. Xochitl, when no one is looking, you will hide Tlaloc behind the crucifixion. So that when we are being baptized, we are



accepting and praying to our God, Tlaloc.

XOCHITL. I can't do that...If they catch me I'll be thrown to the pit of hell or tortured.

TEXCOCO. You won't get caught.

XOCHITL. But if I do?!

TEXCOCO. It's already hell on earth for us, how bad can it be?

XOCHITL. I can't...

TEXCOCO. If their God is, as they claim to be, a loving and forgiving God, he'll forgive you. Our ancestors believed that you went to hell or heaven based upon the way you died. If you get caught, you will die as a heroine, and go to heaven.

XOCHITL. It's a sin to worship false gods.

TEXCOCO. Then which ones are false? Their god; or ours? (*XOCHITL walks away. TEXCOCO follows her.*) Where are you going?

XOCHITL. Back to the Mission.

TEXCOCO. How can you go back? What are you going back to, Fray Francisco? He'll be glad to give you more lessons on suffering. (*XOCHITL freezes and turns around.*) Take the statue with you. Think about it. If you don't want to risk it, then swear to me you will not show it to anyone, or tell anyone where you got it and you will give it back to me. (*XOCHITL gives TEXCOCO an angry look, but she grabs the statue from him and hides it in her morral. Lights fade out.*)

SCENE EIGHT

(*Lights fade in faintly. XOCHITL enters wearing a white dress and carrying the two baskets of (calla-lilies) flowers. She walks up to the altar. From the basket she gets a bunch of flowers and begins to decorate the altar. She brings the other basket next to the altar. She looks around nervously and gets the statue from the basket. Concealed in a large bunch of flowers, she is getting ready to hide the statue when FRAY BARTOLOME appears.*)

FRAY BARTOLOME. What are you doing?

XOCHITL (*jumps up and screams*). I'm sorry, Padre, you scared me.

FRAY BARTOLOME. I heard someone and I came to see.



XOCHITL. I came to prepare the flowers.

FRAY BARTOLOME. So early? Xochitl, you are truly a little angel sent from heaven. You are so dedicated.

XOCHITL (*smiles*). It is nothing.

FRAY BARTOLOME. I see so much good in your heart. I am always filled with joy when I see you show so much devotion. (*FRAY BARTOLOME takes the bunch of flowers from XOCHITL and places them down on a counter. He grabs her hands and squeezes them with his.*) God bless you, hija.

XOCHITL. Thank you.

FRAY BARTOLOME. Hija, I will see you in a couple of hours. I'm going back to finish my prayers.

XOCHITL. Yes, Padre, I will see you later. (*She watches FRAY BARTOLOME walk away. She stands still, unsure what to do. Finally, she grabs the bunch of flowers from the counter and proceeds with her plan. Lights fade out.*)

SCENE NINE

(*A boys' choir sings in the background. The lights come on to the same Mission, now beautifully decorated. FRAY BARTOLOME has a Native American man, AUGUSTIN, on his knees in front of the holy water. XOCHITL and other Native Americans are waiting to be baptized. FRAY BARTOLOME taps the Native American's forehead with water.*)

FRAY BARTOLOME. I baptize you in the name of the father, the son, and the Holy Spirit...Augustín De Los Arroyos...From this day forward you will be another member of the Catholic church.

AUGUSTIN (*rises and bends to kiss FRAY BARTOLOME's hand*). Thank you, Padre.

FRAY BARTOLOME. God bless you.

(*AUGUSTIN leaves and XOCHITL is the next person to get baptized. TEXCOCO enters the Mission. XOCHITL reaches for his hand and holds it. She smiles at him and carefully looks toward the statue of the Crucifixion. FRAY FRANCISCO sees their exchange and walks up to her. TEXCOCO gets in front of the line. XOCHITL shyly looks to her feet.*)

FRAY BARTOLOME. Come forward, hijo, and kneel before our Lord. (*TEXCOCO kneels, and pretends to be happy and obedient.*) Please recite



“Our Heavenly Father.” (*TEX-COCO stutters purposely throughout the prayer. XOCHITL secretly laughs. FRAY BARTOLOME is annoyed by his stutter.*) That’s enough! I’m convinced that you know it. (*He wets his hand with the holy water and taps TEX-COCO’s forehead.*) I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit...Miguel...Miguel...Tartamudo. From this day forward you will be another member of the Catholic Church. (*FRAY BARTOLOME extends his hand out to him. TEXCOCO gives his hand a wet kiss. FRAY BARTOLOME dries it with his robe. TEXCOCO leaves the altar. XOCHITL steps forward, ready to be baptized by FRAY BARTOLOME.*)

FRAY FRANCISCO. Brother Bartolomé, please let me have the honor of baptizing her.

FRAY BARTOLOME (*surprised*). Ah...If you’d like...

FRAY FRANCISCO. Very much so...(*XOCHITL steps back, afraid of him.*) Come forward and kneel before our Lord. (*XOCHITL steps forward, but looks at her feet. He grabs her chin and makes her look up.*) Look at me. (*She raises her head.*) I want you to recite the credo. (*XOCHITL recites the credo. Midway through it she begins to cry.*) Why are you crying?

XOCHITL (*looks him in the eye*). Because I am feeling the love of God. (*FRAY FRANCISCO looks away. He wets his hand with holy water and taps her forehead.*)

FRAY FRANCISCO. I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Maria Isabella De Las Flores. From this day forward you are another member of the Catholic Church. (*He extends his hand to her waiting for it to be kissed. She kisses it with disgust.*)

XOCHITL. Thank you, Padre.

FRAY FRANCISCO. You may stand...May God bless you. (*XOCHITL stands and walks away. TEXCOCO follows her. FRAY FRANCISCO stares at them as they leave together. Lights slowly fade out.*)

SCENE TEN

(*In the darkness of the night, several figures enter from all sides of the stage. TEXCOCO and XOCHITL sneak in carefully. TIXOC enters carrying a lit torch. The several Native Americans surround him and await the new era. TIXOC passes on the fire from his torch to another torch until the fire spreads throughout the stage. All the Native Americans in their excitement embrace each other. TEX-COCO embraces XOCHITL.*)



TEXCOCO. Tixoc has prophesied that you will be my wife. (*XOCHITL takes his hand and raises it up along with all the others. The Native Americans have joined hands in a circle and raise them to give thanks to the deities for life.*)

TIXOC. With this new era let it bring more unity in our battle to regain our motherland from those white demons. (*As quietly as can be done, they break several pots and other pottery. TIXOC lights his torch and passes it on to another.*)

XOCHITL. Then it will be true. (*After some time of passing on the fire, in the distance, horses and Spaniards are heard approaching. They scatter and disappear into the darkness.*)

SCENE ELEVEN

(*Lights fade in. In the Mission, FRAY BARTOLOME and FRAY FRANCISCO are instructing some Native Americans on how to repair the roof. One Native American man is holding a large piece of wood. When he turns around he accidentally knocks off the statue of the Crucifixion. FRAY BARTOLOME immediately strikes the man.*)

FRAY BARTOLOME. Stupid savage! Look what you've done!!

FRAY FRANCISCO. Fray Bartolomé! "We are here to save souls, not break bones," remember, my brother?

FRAY BARTOLOME. Yes, but sometimes it is easy to forget... Help me pick it up. (*FRAY FRANCISCO picks up the statue and finds the dusty gold statue of Tlaloc.*)

FRAY FRANCISCO. Brother Bartolomé, look!

FRAY BARTOLOME. What in the devil?! What's the meaning of this? (*FRAY BARTOLOME looks closely at the dusty gold statue.*) This is an idol of the devil himself!! We have been made fools by those savages!! They took the oath, but they are still practicing paganism! We must find those responsible now before their resistance increases! (*FRAY BARTOLOME spits at the statue in disgust. He stares at it for some time. The spit has removed some of the dust and he soon realizes the statue is made of gold. FRAY BARTOLOME is excited.*) My God! It's gold! Pure gold! (*FRAY BARTOLOME is so thrilled by the little treasure, he kisses the statue and holds it tightly next to his heart. FRAY FRANCISCO and FRAY BARTOLOME quickly go to the altar, and without realizing it, destroy it in search of other idols. They find small gold statues of Tonantzin and*



Quetzalcóatl.) There must be more where these came from.

FRAY FRANCISCO. I think I know who is responsible...Go call the soldiers and follow me. (*Blackout.*)

SCENE TWELVE

(In the darkness we can see two figures lying together. There is groaning coming from one of them. XOCHITL sits up. She is wearing a white dress and is visibly pregnant.)

TEXCOCO. What's wrong?

XOCHITL. The baby is coming.

TEXCOCO. I'll go get the partera. (*TEXCOCO runs out. Several seconds later he returns.*) Xochitl, run!! We've been found out. Go hide in the temple! Run! No matter what, don't let them catch you alive! (*She runs out.*)

(FRAY FRANCISCO and FRAY BARTOLOME enter with TWO SOLDIERS.)

FRAY BARTOLOME. Where is Isabella? (*TEXCOCO doesn't answer.*)

FRAY FRANCISCO. Take him! (*The SOLDIERS tie him up and take him. Fade out.*)

SCENE THIRTEEN

(Lights fade in. On one side of the stage where XOCHITL is squatting, she is ready to give birth. The PARTERA holds her hand as XOCHITL pushes the baby out. On the other side of the stage, TEXCOCO is tied up in a torture chamber, lying on a table. FRAY BARTOLOME and FRAY FRANCISCO are around him. FRAY FRANCISCO handles him by the hair.)

PARTERA. ¡Respira y empuja! Push!

FRAY FRANCISCO. Where is Isabella?!!

FRAY BARTOLOME. Where did you get the idols? (*TEXCOCO is tortured with sticks, which have been resting in a fire, by a SOLDIER. TEXCOCO screams in pain. XOCHITL screams too.*)

PARTERA. ¡Empuja con toda tu fuerza! With all your strength so that your child will be valiente. (*XOCHITL pushes with all her might.*)

FRAY BARTOLOME. Miguel, if you tell us where you're hiding the idols we'll



let you go.

TEXCOCO. My name is Texcoco and my life means nothing to you. I will die whether I tell you or not!

FRAY BARTOLOME. Tell us where the gold—I mean the idols, are!

FRAY FRANCISCO. Burn his feet, maybe then he'll talk. (*A SOLDIER holds a torch to his feet. TEXCOCO cries in pain. XOCHITL does too.*)

PARTERA. It's coming. Just push a little harder!

FRAY BARTOLOME. Remove the torch. I want him alive. I want all those idols destroyed once and for all. Tell us where you have them! (*TEXCOCO remains silent. They torch his feet again.*)

TEXCOCO. I will never tell you!!! Even if you find them and destroy our temples and idols, you will never break our spirits. You can kill me, but you cannot kill our hopes of being free!

FRAY BARTOLOME. Then kill him! (*FRAY FRANCISCO plunges a dagger into TEXCOCO's heart. TEXCOCO screams as he reaches death. XOCHITL screams as she gives birth.*)

PARTERA. It's a boy. (*She spanks the baby. The baby cries. XOCHITL keeps pushing.*)

XOCHITL. There's another life in me! (*The PARTERA helps the baby out. She spanks the second baby.*)

PARTERA. It's another boy. (*The PARTERA wipes the baby clean and studies it. She brings the candle closer to the baby's face.*) *Your children are white. (XOCHITL cries.)* There's no need to be ashamed. So many of our hermanas have had the same thing happen to them...No matter who wins the battles, we always lose...Relax.

(*A young Native American MAN comes running in.*)

HUETZIN. Xochitl! They have killed Texcoco! (*XOCHITL screams in pain and rage.*) No, there's no time to cry! They are looking for you! You must run! (*XOCHITL stands up. Her white dress is stained with blood.*)

PARTERA. ¡Core, largate! Or you'll put us all in danger.

XOCHITL. Which way should I leave?

PARTERA. Por el lago, by the way of the lake! (*XOCHITL picks up her two sons to take them with her.*) Leave them here.



XOCHITL. No. I don't want them to find my children and baptize them.
(XOCHITL runs out with them. Lights fade out.)

SCENE FOURTEEN

(The moon is out, it has the face of a crying woman. XOCHITL runs in with her children. She is running towards the lake. Nearby is the giant tree.)

XOCHITL. Oh, my children, where will I take you? There's nowhere to go...
(XOCHITL climbs the tree with the babies, reaching the top.) Lake Texcoco, how peaceful you look. Your water looks so clean and pure. Pure enough to cleanse my children of the poison. My Tenochtitlán, this is where you began and here is where my life ends. *(Faint sounds of footsteps are heard coming towards her. XOCHITL places one of the babies on the tree. She holds the other baby up towards the sky.)* Tonantzin, my mother earth, can you hear me?

(TONANTZIN appears at the bottom of the lake.)

XOCHITL. Mother earth, to you I give this child. I return him to you to cleanse his body so that his soul will not be conquered. *(She throws the baby into the lake. TONANTZIN catches him and water splashing is heard. XOCHITL picks up the other baby and holds it up toward the sky.)* Tlaloc, can you hear me?

(TLALOC appears at the bottom of the lake.)

XOCHITL. Tlaloc, I give this child to you as my sacrifice, so that you never abandon my people. Continue to give us strength and courage in our fight!
(She throws the baby and TLALOC catches him and water splashing is heard.)
¡Ayy mis hijos! It is because I love you that I've returned you to a better place where you won't be a half-breed, a mestizo, conquered and enslaved, but free souls. Ayyy mi Tenochtitlán, all of your beauty is being destroyed. All of your flowers are dying. *(Footsteps are heard coming closer.)* Ayy mis hijos. It is time for me to join you.

SOLDIER 1 *(voice-over)*. There she is!

SOLDIER 2 *(voice-over)*. She's killed her children!

SOLDIER 1 *(voice-over)*. Get her!

XOCHITL. ¡Qué viva Tenochtitlán!

(XOCHITL dives into the lake. As XOCHITL reaches the lake and drowns herself, LA LLORONA, a horrific and monstrous woman with golden hair and a deformed face, comes out of the tree.)



Photo by Josefina Lopez

La Llorona looks over Xochimilco who recovers from her illegal abortion.

SCENE FIFTEEN: MEXICO, 1913

(At the lake. XOCHIMILCO still sleeps. Spotlight D on LA LLORONA who screams loudly, waking up XOCHIMILCO.)

LA LLORONA. ¡¡¡Ayyy mis Hijos!!!

(XOCHIMILCO freezes as she stares at LA LLORONA. LA LLORONA extends her hands to XOCHIMILCO as if calling out for her to come. LA LLORONA walks toward XOCHIMILCO. XOCHIMILCO screams and hides under her blankets. JUANA goes to her and holds her. XOCHIMILCO screams again thinking LA LLORONA is holding her.)

JUANA. ¿Qué paso?



XOCHIMILCO. I saw her! I saw her! La Llorona was in my dream and then she came out of the lake!

JUANA. You had a nightmare.

XOCHIMILCO. No, she was here! ¡Aquí estaba!

JUANA. Ya, ya. She's gone. I wouldn't let her take you. You imagined her.

XOCHIMILCO. But she screamed and woke me up.

JUANA. No, I was calling for you to wake up. We have to hurry, apurate, because the train will be leaving soon. Ten, put on your coat. (*JUANA hands XOCHIMILCO her coat. XOCHIMILCO puts it on while JUANA walks aside to pray.*) Dios mio, take care of us on our journey to el norte. Let us have a better life than the one we've had here... Our lives, nuestras vidas, are in your hands... Amen. (*They pick up their belongings, packed in morrales and Mexican cookie boxes. JUANA walks ahead as XOCHIMILCO slowly follows. XOCHIMILCO turns back to get one last look at her home and LA LLORONA is there. LA LLORONA walks toward her. She sticks out her hand, which is bloody, to XOCHIMILCO who stands watching her, mesmerized. As LA LLORONA gets closer, XOCHIMILCO finally awakens from the spell and screams. XOCHIMILCO tries to catch up to JUANA. She keeps turning back and LA LLORONA is still there with her hands up as if calling for her. JUANA and XOCHIMILCO head U and disappear in the darkness. Lights slowly fade out as we see LA LLORONA rubbing her bloody hands together and looking towards heaven.*)

END OF ACT ONE



UNCONQUERED SPIRITS

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE: U.S.A., SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 1938

(Lights fade in. XOCHIMILCO, who is now 35 years old, but looks older from hard work, is on her knees. She is at the bedside of her daughter, MALINA, the oldest of her five children, whom she is tucking into bed. XOCHIMILCO kisses MALINA on the forehead and turns out the lights. On a wall there is a little altar for JUAN, her deceased husband. She lights a candle for him and begins her prayer.)

XOCHIMILCO. Juan, if you were here I probably wouldn't have thought about it, but I have to do it. It's for the best... Que descanses en paz. Mi querido Juan como te extraño. *(She grabs her purse and sweater and begins to go out the door. MALINA hears her and quickly sits up.)*

MALINA. Where are you going, Mamíta?

XOCHIMILCO. I'm...I'm going out.

MALINA. But where?

XOCHIMILCO. Just for a little walk.

MALINA. You're not going to leave us, are you? *(XOCHIMILCO is so surprised by her question, she immediately comes back to reassure her.)*

XOCHIMILCO. Mijita, why would you ask me that? Of course not!

MALINA. It's just that I see you sad all the time. Papí looked like that before...



he left.

XOCHIMILCO. But how can you remember his look? You were so young.

MALINA. I remember him.

XOCHIMILCO. And your father; your father didn't leave you. If it would have been up to him, he would have lived until you were all grown up...No, cariño, I'm not going to leave you.

MALINA. Do you promise?

XOCHIMILCO. Pues, if God gives me permission, I promise I won't leave you.

MALINA. Mamíta, I love you.

XOCHIMILCO. Yo tambien te amo a ti...I have you in my corazón. I have all of your hermanitos, right here tambien...Bueno, ya. You better go to sleep.

MALINA. No, Mamíta. I don't feel like going to sleep.

XOCHIMILCO. You have to. Tomorrow is a school day.

MALINA. But I don't want to go to sleep. I don't want to go to school anymore!

XOCHIMILCO. Why not?

MALINA. They keep calling me a "wetback" and they tell me I should go back to where I belong.

XOCHIMILCO. But you do belong, you were born here.

MALINA. Three boys keep picking on me and it gets me so angry. I wish I could hit them back when they spit at me.

XOCHIMILCO. Just ignore them and walk faster. Now please go to sleep, I'm going to be late.

MALINA. For what? Who are you meeting?

XOCHIMILCO. Mi madre would always tell me, "Vas a verlo, when you get married and have children, you're going to have a daughter just like you." So, I must deserve you, Malina.

MALINA (*stalling for time*). Tell me a bedtime story.

XOCHIMILCO. I don't know any.

MALINA. Make one up.



XOCHIMILCO (*thinks about it seriously*). Hmm...I know one, but it's very scary.

MALINA. I can take it. Tell it to me.

XOCHIMILCO. It's about La Llorona.

MALINA. La what?

XOCHIMILCO. La Llorona. La Llorona is the spirit of a woman, all dressed in white, who roams by the rivers looking for her dead children who she killed a long time ago...I think I remember my mother telling me that an uncle of hers saw her many years ago when he was herding sheep one night in Mexico. She came to him and asked him for water. He said she was very beautiful with long golden hair and a pale face. He asked her what she was doing there so late and she simply said she usually walked by there. She thanked him for the water and walked away. From a distance she screamed, "¡Ay mis hijos!" and disappeared. (*MALINA screams.*) So wherever there are rivers, she roams by, looking for her children. And when she sees children misbehaving, she comes and pulls them out of their beds by their feet and takes them with her.

MALINA. But there aren't any rivers around here, are there? (*XOCHIMILCO nods "yes."* *MALINA gasps in fear. She covers herself under the blankets.*)

XOCHIMILCO. No, don't worry, if you behave, I won't let her take you... Ya me voi.

MALINA. Aren't you scared La Llorona will get you?

XOCHIMILCO. No...I'm a good girl. Buenas noches. (*XOCHIMILCO exits through the door. Lights fade out.*)

SCENE TWO

(*The moon is out, and it is the only light XOCHIMILCO has to guide her through the streets. As she walks by herself the wind whispers and "¡Ayyy mis hijos!" can almost be heard. XOCHIMILCO searches for an address written on a small paper she is holding. She finds the address. She is more disappointed than happy she found it.*)

XOCHIMILCO. What am I doing?...(*Lights fade out.*)

SCENE THREE

(*FLASHBACK: Lights fade in. In the center of the stage is a large table full of*



pecans and tin cylinders. There are several women in the factory. It's very hot and they are busy shelling pecans. There is a table D with four chairs and three women. PETRA, LOLA and EMMA.)

LOLA. Last night my husband took me to see a movie con mi galan, my Clark Gable. ¡Ayyy, que guapo ese pinche viejo!

PETRA. A mi ni me gustan nadita esos Americanos. The one I like is Pedro Infante. Ese merito viejo condenado. For that man I'd be willing to leave my husband.

LOLA. Ayy sí, ni te creo.

PETRA. Pues one of these days don't be surprised if you get a postcard from Hawaii from me and Pedro Infante. *(They laugh together.)* Y tu, Emma, how come you're so quiet?

EMMA. Huh? Oh, I was just thinking about a book I read last night. It was exceptional, but I didn't understand it completely...*(Whispering.)* Do you know who Karl Marx is?

LOLA. ¿Quién? Who?

EMMA. Karl Marx. He wrote, "It is not the conscience of man that determines his existence. It is his existence that determines his conscience..." What do you think? Do you agree?

PETRA. Ayy, mijita, n'ombre, don't talk to me about books, mejor cuéntame de novelas. Lola, did you hear last night's novela episode?

LOLA. Pos si, how could I miss it. ¡Se 'sta poniendo bien seria la cosa!

(XOCHIMILCO enters from U. She screams, facing U as she comes in.)

XOCHIMILCO. ¡Viejos cochinos! ¡Sin verguenzas! ¡No tienen madres!

LOLA. What happened?

XOCHIMILCO. I went behind the bushes to go do number 1 and number 2 and there were these two viejos rabo verde looking to get an eyeful.

LOLA. I know who they are. When I went to the bushes allí estaban de mensos los idiotas.

PETRA. That guy with the Emiliano Zapata moustache and the crooked eyes?

LOLA. ¡Ese merito!

XOCHIMILCO. I'm tired of having to go to the bushes to shit! Why haven't they fixed the women's toilet? It's been broken for months and they still don't



do anything about it.

EMMA. Why don't we go complain together, that way they'll listen to us.

PETRA. It won't help. They'll just tell us that a plumber is coming next week.

LOLA. So what did you use to wipe your nalgas?

XOCHIMILCO. I found a newspaper, and cleaned myself with Clark Gable's face.

LOLA. Ay, why did you have to do that? Why didn't you save it for me so he could have kissed my ass.

PETRA (*somewhat disgusted*). Ayy, que grosera y mal hablada eres pinche, Lola.

LOLA. Talking about grosera...Do you know the joke about...(EMMA throws some pecans in her mouth.)

PETRA. Don't eat them! Or they'll take them away from your wages.

EMMA. I thought they already did. They pay us so little at least I can have a free lunch on them. (*She continues eating them.*)

XOCHIMILCO. So what's the joke?

LOLA. There were these two men who were trying to cross the border. One was named Juan and the other Odenasio. Odenasio had to go to the bathroom so bad he went behind a big rock. Soon after, a pinche gringo de la migra came up to him and asked him in his terrible Spanish, "¿On-de na-cio?" Juan tells him he's behind that rock. The gringo doesn't understand, so he asks him "¿Tiene papeles? Juan tells him, "No. Usa piedras." (*XOCHIMILCO and PETRA barely chuckle.*) Ora pues, I know a funnier one. There once was a...

(*The supervisor, CHRIS, an Anglo, walks in on them. They instantly become silent and work faster. CHRIS walks around them watching them work. They can feel his eyes staring down their necks. CHRIS stares at PETRA. She becomes very nervous.*)

CHRIS. You work too slow. (*PETRA works faster. CHRIS stares at XOCHIMILCO. XOCHIMILCO tries to ignore him, then she stares at him.*)

XOCHIMILCO. Is something wrong?

CHRIS. Did I say something was wrong?

XOCHIMILCO. No, but you're looking at me like there's something wrong. (*XOCHIMILCO looks away from him and continues working. He continues*



to stare down at her. XOCHIMILCO raises her head once again.) We want to know when you're going to fix the women's toilet?

CHRIS. Next week... You women have to stop talking and work faster. This table is always turning in less pounds than the rest of the tables. If this continues I'm going to have to separate you or even fire one of you. *(CHRIS writes a short report on his clipboard. He walks away to the other tables.)*

LOLA. Ahhh, Perro que ladra no muerde. He's all talk, but he's got no power.

EMMA. I think he likes you, Xochi.

LOLA *(joking)*. Que se me hace. You like white men, Xochi?

XOCHIMILCO *(annoyed and disgusted)*. Por favor. *(PETRA stops working. She presses her hands trying to remove the pain.)* Don't work so hard... They will still pay you the same miserable wage. Don't go killing yourself for them. You're not a mule or an animal... My husband worked hard all of his life thinking that if he worked hard he would be promoted. He wasn't... He died of overwork... ¡Asi que se chingen ellos!

LOLA. Pues si, they're never gonna fix that toilet, anyway...

EMMA. Yes, they will. If all the women working here got together and demanded that, they'd fix it. And not just the toilet. We could even demand higher wages.

PETRA. Where do you get those ideas, niña? From your books? It's her first week on the job and she already wants to cause trouble.

XOCHIMILCO. Leave her alone, Petra. It's not her fault she's young. She should want better.

PETRA. Pos si, uno de viejo ya que le importa. I'm so old I'm just waiting around to pass out and die. *(The WOMEN look at PETRA then look at each other knowing she'd like some sympathy. Lights slowly fade out.)*

SCENE FOUR

(FLASHBACK: In a dimly lit motel room, CHRIS and XOCHIMILCO are on the bed in an embrace. XOCHIMILCO is wearing a black camisole and CHRIS is wearing only trunks. CHRIS kisses her neck as he undoes her braid behind her. XOCHIMILCO rests on him and stares off.)

XOCHIMILCO. I don't like pretending we hate each other.

CHRIS. It works. *(He grabs her breasts.)* I love your tits, Cathleen.



XOCHIMILCO. Cathleen? Why did you call me Cathleen?

CHRIS. I said that?...Oh, it's because I don't like your name. "Xochi" reminds me of a poodle. *(She bops him on the head and they laugh. They kiss.)*

XOCHIMILCO. Can you stop picking on Petra? Poor woman, she reminds me of my mother.

CHRIS. I'm just doing my job.

XOCHIMILCO. So when is the toilet going to get fixed?

CHRIS. Will you cut it out with that!

XOCHIMILCO. Fine! I won't mention it again. *(Hurt, XOCHIMILCO, turns away from him. He touches her chin and brings her face to his.)*

CHRIS. I told my boss twice about fixing the toilet, and he said that it would cost "too much." They're not going to fix it. Not now, not ever. He asked me why I was so concerned about it. He asked me if I was a "spic lover."

XOCHIMILCO. So what did you tell him?

CHRIS. I told him "no"...I'm in love with you, but you're different.

XOCHIMILCO. I'm no different than any of the other women...

CHRIS. Stay away from Emma. There are rumors that she is a communist.

XOCHIMILCO *(in disbelief, laughs)*. What? She's not a communist. She's just too smart to be working there and she's probably going to find herself a better job soon. She's got a high school education.

CHRIS. That's what I'm worried about...I just found out that my bosses are going to cut the pay by 1 cent per pound. What do you think your people are going to do?

XOCHIMILCO. I don't know...

CHRIS. Do you think they'll go on strike?

(XOCHIMILCO thinks about it. Then LA LLORONA appears before her. She gasps. She disappears soon after.)

XOCHIMILCO. I just saw...No, nothing...Are you going to marry me?

CHRIS. What? Not this again? What is it with you today? You're just full of questions and demands.

XOCHIMILCO. Are you going to marry me or are we just going to mess around until my tits get so saggy you'll get tired of them and leave me?



CHRIS. I can't marry you.

XOCHIMILCO. Why not?

CHRIS. Because...

XOCHIMILCO. Why? You love me, I love you...It's my children, isn't it?

CHRIS. No, I can't marry you because...you're Mexican. I'll lose my job.

XOCHIMILCO. I can't stand hiding like this. I feel like a traitor, screwing the supervisor...Let's get away together!

CHRIS. Where can you and I go and be together without it being a problem? Without getting death threats. I won't be able to get a job anywhere with you as my wife. Look, neither of us was looking for this, but it happened. A love like this isn't supposed to happen, but it did. *(XOCHIMILCO gets off the bed. She picks up her panties and puts them on. She picks up her other clothes and puts them on.)* What are you doing?

XOCHIMILCO. I'm too old to play your whore. I've got five kids waiting for these "tits"!

CHRIS. Xochi, don't leave like this! *(XOCHIMILCO angrily exits. Lights fade out.)*

SCENE FIVE

(FLASHFORWARD: Lights fade in. XOCHIMILCO is in the same lonely street as before, squatting on the floor like a little kid unsure what to do. A light turns on and an old woman, SERAFINA, sticks out her head.)

SERAFINA. Buenas noches...What are you doing all by yourself outside my door? Did "La Rescatera" send you?

XOCHIMILCO. Yes, how did you know?

SERAFINA. All the women who come to me, sometimes wait outside unable to come in. Some leave, some come in. Pasate, hija. *(XOCHIMILCO enters SERAFINA's quaint, dark, and eerie house.)* ¿Hace mucho frio afuera?

XOCHIMILCO *(shyly)*. Yes, it's kind of chilly.

SERAFINA. Did you have any difficulty finding my house?

XOCHIMILCO. No.

SERAFINA. Are you sure you want to do this? *(XOCHIMILCO thinks about it)*



and takes her time to come up with an answer. Lights slowly fade out.)

SCENE SIX

(FLASHBACK: Lights fade in. Inside the pecan factory, XOCHIMILCO, EMMA, LOLA and PETRA are busy shelling pecans.)

PETRA. Lola, come me with me to the bathroom so you can throw rocks at all those viejos cochinos trying to get an eyeful.

LOLA. Ayy, doña Petra, at your age who is going to bother looking.

PETRA. You never know. Just because I'm old doesn't mean que no tengo pague. *(LOLA laughs to herself. PETRA and LOLA walk offstage together. EMMA carefully observes them leave, then turns to XOCHIMILCO.)*

EMMA. Xochi, have you ever heard of the Workers Alliance?

XOCHIMILCO. No.

EMMA. I am recruiting members for the Workers Alliance and I wanted you to join—

XOCHIMILCO. I'm not getting involved in anything you're doing.

EMMA. Did Chris warn you not to get involved with me?

XOCHIMILCO. Chris? Why would you say that?

EMMA. He wants to get me fired more than anyone else. I need to be here long enough to get all the women to join the Workers Alliance...and get you to help me.

XOCHIMILCO. Why would you want me to help you?

EMMA. Because you would make a good leader, you're an angry woman, and you don't have a husband.

XOCHIMILCO. Do you have any children?

EMMA. No and I don't plan to have any as long as things continue to be this bad for Mexicans.

XOCHIMILCO. So you think you have everything figured out?

EMMA. No...Xochi, I respect you. The women listen to you, and you're going to help me.

XOCHIMILCO. What makes you so sure I'm going to help you?



EMMA (*thinks about it for a minute*). Did you know Chris is married?

XOCHIMILCO. What do you want from me?

EMMA. You didn't know he was married?

XOCHIMILCO. Oh, so now I'm supposed to be so jealous and enraged that I will help you out of revenge?

EMMA. It's the truth. Her name is Cathleen, they have two children... (*XOCHIMILCO breaks down crying. She quickly remembers she's in public and covers up her pain. XOCHIMILCO begins to recover.*) Xochi, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to be so cruel. (*XOCHIMILCO stares at her and then slowly gives in to EMMA.*)

XOCHIMILCO. He told me they're planning on cutting the pay on the pound by 1 cent.

EMMA. When?

XOCHIMILCO. I don't know when they're going to announce it.

EMMA. By the time they do, we can be preparing for a strike.

XOCHIMILCO. I'm not going to go on strike!

EMMA. So then you're just going to put up with it? Keep praying? Leave it in God's hands so that things will change, like a good little Mexican?

XOCHIMILCO. No, I don't believe in God! I don't even believe in the church or praying...It's just not going to work!

EMMA. And the reason things never change is because with Mexicans like you, they don't have to beat us down, we do that ourselves. (*XOCHIMILCO can't refute her. She thinks about it.*)

XOCHIMILCO. How do you want me to help you? (*Lights fade out.*)

SCENE SEVEN

(*FLASHBACK: Lights fade in. At the pecan factory the bell rings and the women are done for the day. They rise and get ready to leave. LOLA, XOCHIMILCO, and PETRA walk out together.*)

PETRA. Do you really think that's going to work? Because I told my viejo and he wasn't too crazy about the idea, but he agreed to let me go and take care of my esquincles as long as I made dinner first.



LOLA. Then we'll meet you at 7:00. Do you want us to bring dinner?

XOCHIMILCO. No, just get there on time and invite any of the women who don't know.

PETRA. But do you really think it's going to work?

XOCHIMILCO. We'll never know until we try it...My purse? I almost forgot it...I'll see you. (*XOCHIMILCO runs back into the factory room for her purse. The lights are turned off in the factory. XOCHIMILCO calls out.*) Hello! Anyone there? Can you turn on the lights? I forgot my purse.

(*CHRIS comes in from the darkness holding her purse.*)

CHRIS. Is this yours? (*XOCHIMILCO is frightened by him. She hides her fear. She walks up to CHRIS.*)

XOCHIMILCO. Yes, it is. Thank you.

CHRIS (*pulls away the purse from her reach, flirting*). I need you to beg a little harder.

XOCHIMILCO. I'm not going to beg for it. It's mine. Give it to me. (*She lunges for her purse, he holds on to her. She fights him playfully.*) Let me go. (*He starts kissing her neck, she tries to resist him, but she gets caught up in his affection and falls for his kisses. He reaches for her breasts, then she grabs his hands.*) Did you miss them?... How do they compare with your wife's? Do Catheleen's tits sag?

CHRIS. Who's Catheleen?

XOCHIMILCO. If you would have told me you were married I still might have screwed you, but at least I wouldn't have hoped that you and I could have...!

CHRIS. What are you talking about? Who told you I was married? Emma? Is she trying to manipulate you, brainwash you, into believing I'm the enemy? Has she turned you against me? Do you believe I could do that to you?

XOCHIMILCO. You have two children! I was the "other woman"! No wonder I felt like a whore all along! You lied to me!

CHRIS. There are rumors going around that there's going to be a strike after we announce the cutbacks. How did Emma find out? I told you to stay away from her, but you told her! You betrayed me!

XOCHIMILCO. I don't know what you're talking about...

CHRIS. Why are you women gathering tonight? What are you going to talk about?



XOCHIMILCO. A friend of ours is going to have a baby. We're planning a baby shower.

CHRIS. Which friend?

XOCHIMILCO. You don't know her... Now give me my purse?... Please! I have to go. My children are waiting for me.

CHRIS. No... Xochi, I miss you... This whole week without you, it's... I'll leave my wife for you... (*XOCHIMILCO is very scared, but she acts indifferent.*)

XOCHIMILCO. You're just saying that.

CHRIS. No... Take me back. (*CHRIS extends his hand with the purse, defenselessly. XOCHIMILCO carefully takes it. She sees he is sincere and approaches him.*)

XOCHIMILCO. You would leave your wife for me? (*He nods. They stare at each other for a few seconds and she seductively pushes him against the table. She puts the purse on the side of the table and gets on top of him. They begin kissing passionately and aggressively, rotating being on top. They begin to disrobe, but then XOCHIMILCO freezes. She pushes him off.*) No. Stop. Get off of me... This isn't going to work. Even if you marry me, one of us will lose our job. And we can't go anywhere together without it being a problem. It can't work, remember?

CHRIS. We can try.

XOCHIMILCO. No. I know what you're going to do. You're going to keep me hanging on with the promise that you're going to leave her. But you won't. Men like you don't leave their wives for someone like me. And if you did I wouldn't want to marry you. Because if you could cheat on your wife and leave her, you'll do the same to me. I'm too old to be that stupid. (*XOCHIMILCO reaches for her purse. He snatches it from her.*)

CHRIS. No.

XOCHIMILCO. Then keep it. (*XOCHIMILCO starts to walk away.*)

CHRIS. Are you sure about that? You're willing to give up your green card so easily? If the Immigration Patrol catches you without one, they're going to take you back to your backward country, you little commie.

XOCHIMILCO. What did you call me?

CHRIS. Now, I understand what you were doing. You were just screwing me to get me to tell you things to tell Emma!



XOCHIMILCO (*sarcastically*). Yeah, that's what I was doing! All this time I was plotting with Emma. I would leave my children at night so I could screw you and serve the communist party as a spy! (*Laughs.*) Yeah, and you know what we're going to do? We're going to organize a strike and run this company into the ground. And you're going to lose your job. And you won't be able to boss us around anymore and you're going to be nothing! So give me my goddamn purse! (*She lunges and they fight for it. He holds her.*) Let me go!

CHRIS. Don't go! I want you back.

XOCHIMILCO. But I don't want you! I don't need you. You're nothing!

CHRIS. I love you!

XOCHIMILCO (*stops fighting him*). You do?

CHRIS. Yes. (*XOCHIMILCO kisses him. He closes his eyes, refreshed by her affection. Then, she kicks him in the groin, grabs her purse, and makes a run for it.*) You stupid bitch! (*CHRIS catches her. He drags her to a table by the hair and "slaps" all the tin cylinders and pecans off the table to clear it. He throws her on the table where he pins her down. She fights back with all of her might. CHRIS puts his hand over her mouth and unzips his pants.*)...Let's see how much of a fighter you are after I get through with you...(*Blackout. In the darkness we hear moaning and muffled screams.*)

SCENE EIGHT

(*Still in the darkness we hear XOCHIMILCO's screams. Lights fade in and XOCHIMILCO is lying on a table with her legs spread open. SERAFINA is in between her legs inserting a wire clothes hanger. XOCHIMILCO bites into a cloth when she can't stand the pain.*)

The present: A light shines on XOCHIMILCO's head. PETRA, EMMA, and LOLA appear behind her and look down at her.)

LOLA. What's wrong?

PETRA. How come you're acting this way?

EMMA. What happened to our plans? We waited for you all night, but you didn't show up.

PETRA. ¿Porqué ya no nos hablas? What happened to you? (*PETRA, EMMA, and LOLA disappear.*)

(*SERAFINA drops the remains of the aborted fetus into a bucket by the table.*)



SERAFINA (*reflecting*). We used to throw them in rivers, now we throw them in buckets...

XOCHIMILCO. What?

SERAFINA. Nothing. (*SERAFINA cleans her hands after she finishes.*) I think you were going to have twins.

XOCHIMILCO. Please don't tell me that. (*XOCHIMILCO begins crying. SERAFINA finishes the abortion. She washes her hands with water and picks up her instruments.*)

SERAFINA. Ya acabe. Rest a little. But when you feel ready you must get up and go home and rest for a couple of days. (*XOCHIMILCO slowly gets up. She is pale and weak. She puts on her panties and her sweater. She tries to bend and pick up her purse but it hurts too much. SERAFINA picks up the purse and hands it to her. XOCHIMILCO opens it and takes out money.*)

XOCHIMILCO. Gracias. (*XOCHIMILCO gives SERAFINA money. SERAFINA takes it and gives her a piece of paper.*)

SERAFINA. I've listed some of the hiervas you can use to help the pain. If you start feeling worse, go to the emergency room. (*XOCHIMILCO nods. She starts to walk out.*) Cuidate.

XOCHIMILCO. Adiós. (*Lights fade out.*)

SCENE NINE

(*The moonlight illuminates XOCHIMILCO's pale face. She walks slowly holding on to anything she can. She is in a terrible condition and has to rest on the ground. LA LLORONA appears behind XOCHIMILCO.*)

XOCHIMILCO. ¡Ayyyy mis hijos! (*Startled, gets up and runs for her life. LA LLORONA follows after her. Lights fade out.*)

SCENE TEN

(*Lights fade in faintly. XOCHIMILCO runs to and enters through the doors of a little church. She leans on the doors trying to catch her breath. She slides down slowly and crawls to the front of the church to the altar. She starts praying silently. A PRIEST appears behind her.*)

PRIEST. What is wrong with you? Are you all right, hija?



XOCHIMILCO. I have to confess, Padre.

PRIEST. What is your urgency?

XOCHIMILCO. I'm dying.

PRIEST. When was your last confession?

XOCHIMILCO. Three years ago.

PRIEST. Why has it been so long?

XOCHIMILCO. My husband died and I stopped believing in God because God abandoned me.

PRIEST. I will hear your confession. *(Lights change to create a more intimate feeling. XOCHIMILCO gets on her knees.)*

XOCHIMILCO. Forgive me, Padre for I have...I've had an abortion. I have five children and like I said, my husband died three years ago and I just couldn't have another one.

PRIEST. That's no reason for committing such a sin!

XOCHIMILCO. Pero, Padre...I resisted, and it was against my will...

PRIEST. That was not the child's fault.

XOCHIMILCO. Yes, it wasn't their fault...

PRIEST. Their?

XOCHIMILCO. They were twins.

PRIEST. Twins!

XOCHIMILCO. I'm sorry! *(XOCHIMILCO falls lower. Lights change, and so does XOCHIMILCO's reality. The PRIEST takes out a whip and starts whipping her.)*

PRIEST. Scream for your children! *(He whips her harder. XOCHIMILCO cannot escape. She gets whipped for every attempt to flee. Blood drips between her legs.)* Scream for your children, sinner! *(XOCHIMILCO tries to walk out of the church.)*

XOCHIMILCO. ¡¡¡Ayyy mis hijos!!!

PRIEST. Louder! Louder so that everyone can hear you! *(The PRIEST whips her even harder.)*

XOCHIMILCO. ¡¡¡¡¡Ayyy mis hijos!!!! *(XOCHIMILCO falls to the floor. She is*



left on the floor, bloody and lifeless. Blackout.)

SCENE ELEVEN

(A small light pierces the darkness. It becomes overwhelming and through the light two ANGELS, male and female, in brown angelic gowns, enter. They walk to XOCHIMILCO's corpse. They remove her dress and wipe off the blood. They cleanse her naked body. They wake her up.)

ANGELS. Get ready to meet your God.

XOCHIMILCO. My God?...I thought I had no God. Where is my God? I thought you had abandoned me.

GOD'S VOICE *(a man and a woman)*. Xochimilco, I have not abandoned you.

XOCHIMILCO. Then why have you allowed all these horrible things to happen to me and my people? So many crimes committed against my people, all in your name, and you allowed them! So I began to think that I must have no God or you would have protected me. Or they would have stopped and seen that I too was a child of God!

GOD. I protected you by giving you the strength to remind them of your humanity.

XOCHIMILCO. But they only hate me more.

GOD. They don't hate you. They're afraid of you. They're afraid to discover in themselves the same pain, the same longings and dreams that you have. They fear the anger and the hatred of all your people whom they have hurt... I'm going to let you live...Go home and take care of the children you do have.

XOCHIMILCO. I am not sorry. I have given them back to you.

GOD. You are still my child.

XOCHIMILCO. I am?

GOD. Don't forget that.

(The light slowly fades. God disappears and LA LLORONA appears. XOCHIMILCO is no longer afraid of LA LLORONA, who is merely a woman. LA LLORONA extends her hand out to her. XOCHIMILCO reaches for it. LA LLORONA helps her walk and becomes her crutch for the way home.)

The sun's rays light the stage where XOCHIMILCO's children are still asleep. LA LLORONA enters holding XOCHIMILCO's lifeless body. She places her



down on her bed and tucks her in. LA LLORONA disappears. After a few minutes MALINA uncovers her face, and crawls out of the blankets. She taps XOCHIMILCO's face to wake her up. XOCHIMILCO awakens.)

MALINA. Mamíta, you came back! I prayed all night that you would. (*Lights fade out.*)

SCENE TWELVE

(FLASHFORWARD: Lights fade in on the pecan factory where LOLA, EMMA, and PETRA are busily working. XOCHIMILCO walks in ready to work although she is still pale and weak. The WOMEN are surprised by her presence. They stare at her, not sure what to say.)

LOLA. He came earlier looking for you.

EMMA. Where have you been?

PETRA. ¿Qué te Pasa Xochi? Why didn't you come yesterday or the day before?

XOCHIMILCO. I've been very sick...I went to La Rescatera...She told me where I could get an abortion. (*LOLA and PETRA grimace in disbelief. EMMA is shocked. PETRA reaches out for her and holds her. XOCHIMILCO remains still and stoic.*)

LOLA. Why didn't you tell us!

XOCHIMILCO. Because...I was ashamed.

LOLA. How did it happen?

(CHRIS enters. He immediately notices XOCHIMILCO. He walks up to her breaking the interchange between PETRA and XOCHIMILCO.)

CHRIS. Why do you even bother showing up today? You've missed two days already. You were fired. There are a lot of other women who'd be happy to have your job.

PETRA. Please let her stay. Pobrecita, she's been sick.

LOLA. She's the fastest worker you've got. Let her stay!

CHRIS (*thinks about it*). She can stay...Just don't be absent another day or you're fired. And don't talk back to me anymore or else...

EMMA. Or else what?



CHRIS. I'm not talking to you.

EMMA. I want to know what the "or else" means!

CHRIS. Shut up! You've got a big mouth!

EMMA. Does anyone else want to know what "or else" means?!

CHRIS. All right, that's it. I'm going to fire one of you. Let's see. Who should I pick? Petra, how would you like to be fired? Or Lola, how about you?

XOCHIMILCO. I'll leave! (*XOCHIMILCO picks up her purse and sweater and begins to walk out.*)

PETRA. ¿Pero qué estas haciendo? He's offered to give you your job back, just stay.

LOLA. No seas orgullosa. You need this job.

EMMA. No, Xochi, keep walking!

CHRIS. Yeah, keep walking! What are you going to feed your children? Pride?

XOCHIMILCO (*turns around*). No! But I can teach them not to let people treat them like you've treated me! Why don't you show them what "or else" means?

CHRIS. Get out of here! You're fired!

XOCHIMILCO. No! I want you to show them. You bastard! Coward! (*She slaps him. He raises his hand to strike her, but he can't slap the face he's caressed before. The WOMEN stop to look at him.*) Come on! (*She "slaps" the pecans and the tin cylinders off the table and throws herself on the table with her legs spread open.*) Do it to me again! Show all these women what happens to a woman with a big mouth. Do it right here!!... See if you can do it without us killing you first! (*CHRIS is now surrounded by all the WOMEN. He cannot meet the challenge and backs away. XOCHIMILCO stands on the table. She is crying.*) And don't you ever touch any of my hermanas like that! Because one of these nights when you're asleep, I will sneak into your bed, and when you think you're safe, snuggled in your bed like a baby, I will choke you until you reach the hell that you've put me through. And you'll have to beg me to remember that I believe in God! (*He tries to ignore her. The WOMEN look at him with disgust and he can't ignore her.*) I will never work here again. (*To the WOMEN.*) And you shouldn't work here either! (*XOCHIMILCO walks out of the factory crying. All the WOMEN look at one another. EMMA starts chanting.*)

EMMA. ¡Huelga! ¡Huelga! (*LOLA joins in the chanting, then PETRA. Pretty soon all the WOMEN are chanting "Huelga." EMMA walks out and the rest of*



the WOMEN slowly follow. Lights fade out.)

SCENE THIRTEEN

(Lights fade to Xochimilco's apartment. XOCHIMILCO enters, frantic.)

XOCHIMILCO. Diosito, what have I done?

(She paces nervously. MALINA enters. Her face is painted with white paint. XOCHIMILCO cannot believe her eyes.)

XOCHIMILCO. What happened?

MALINA. I did what you told me to do. They called me a “wetback,” I ignored them and kept walking. But they grabbed me and told me I was a dirty Mexican and the only way I could be clean was if I were white. *(MALINA stops to cry. XOCHIMILCO holds her and begins to remove the paint from her face.)*

XOCHIMILCO. No mijita, God made you the way you are for a reason. *(XOCHIMILCO sits MALINA down as she wipes off the paint.)* Did I ever tell you the story of how God made people? *(MALINA shakes her head “no.”)* Well, Diosito was making cookies in the shape of little people. It was God's first time making cookies so God made the dough from scratch. God put all these magic ingredients into the dough. God put the cookie dough in the oven, but forgot about it. When God remembered, God took out the cookies and they were all burnt. So these became the black people. Then God put some more cookie dough to bake. But God was so anxious not to burn them that God took out the cookies before they were ready and they came out raw. So these became the white people. Then God wanted to try one more time. So God put some more dough in the oven determined to get it right. God was patient, and when God took out the cookies God was so happy because they came out golden brown, just right. And these became the brown people... You see how you're special?

MALINA. Then why did they do this?

XOCHIMILCO. Because you know something they don't know.

MALINA. What's that?

XOCHIMILCO. They're afraid of you because they don't know that you're a good person. That your heart is full of love and hopes just like everyone else's. *(There is a loud knock on the door.)*

PETRA *(offstage)*. Xochi! ¡Abre!



(XOCHIMILCO lets PETRA in.)

PETRA. They're looking for you! The police are on their way!

XOCHIMILCO. What did I do?

PETRA. They're accusing you of being a communist or no se que otra pendejada. But they're gonna get you. Mira, my brother is waiting for you. Go with him and he'll take you to my compadre who will take you to Mexico. ¡Pero apurate!

XOCHIMILCO. But what about my children?

PETRA. I'll go pick them up at school and send them later.

XOCHIMILCO. Malina, pack some clothes, quickly!

MALINA. Why are we leaving?

XOCHIMILCO. Just go! Do it! *(XOCHIMILCO starts collecting some personal belongings.)*

MALINA. Why are the police looking for you? What did you do wrong?

XOCHIMILCO *(stops packing)*. Nothing. I did nothing wrong. Do you believe me?

MALINA. Yes...*(XOCHIMILCO continues packing.)* Then why are we leaving? *(XOCHIMILCO can't answer. She stops packing.)*

XOCHIMILCO. Petra, I'm not going.

PETRA. ¿Qué? No, no. You don't have a choice! They're going to arrest you and they're going to find you guilty!

XOCHIMILCO. But I'm innocent!

PETRA. Who cares if you're innocent? There is no justice pa' nostra gente, you know that. Your husband died trying to get it, so don't be a martyr. You're not going to change things.

XOCHIMILCO. I can't leave, Petra! My husband and I worked hard so that we could give our children a better life. Why do I have to leave this country? Esta tierra tambien es mia. It belongs to my children, and I'm not going to take it away from them.

PETRA. If you don't leave, they'll put you in jail and they'll take away your children.

XOCHIMILCO. No puedo.



PETRA. ¡Terca como una...! I wish I could drag you by the hair...*(PETRA embraces XOCHIMILCO when she realizes she can't change her mind.)*

Ontonces mi amiga, que Dios te bendiga, porque te van a joder. *(PETRA kisses her on the cheek.)*

XOCHIMILCO. Aquí me quedo. I'll wait for them.

PETRA. Should I take Malina?

MALINA. No. I want to stay with you. *(PETRA leaves. XOCHIMILCO stands with MALINA as she holds her. They anxiously await the police. Lights fade out.)*

SCENE FOURTEEN

(FLASHFORWARD: XOCHIMILCO and MALINA remain standing together. They are in a courtroom. There is a spotlight on both of them.)

RADIO REPORT *(voice-over)*. In the news today, February 1, 1938, at the peak of the pecan shelling season, thousands of shellers walked off their jobs after management cut rates by 1 cent a pound. At City Hall, a thousand picketers were tear-gassed and some even jailed. Management justified the lack of increase in wages by saying, quote, "If Mexicans earned more, they would just spend it on tequila and on worthless trinkets in the dime store..."

JUDGE *(voice-over, omnipotent)*. This court finds you guilty of unlawful gathering, destruction of property, conspiracy to riot, conspiracy to do harm, espionage, and subversive activities aimed to overthrow the government of the United States. You are a communist and you are a national threat. Therefore it is justifiable to sentence you to 10 years in prison for the crimes you have committed against the government of the United States of America.

EMMA *(voice-over)*. She's innocent!

(A BAILIFF approaches XOCHIMILCO to take MALINA from her. MALINA fights to hold on.)

MALINA. No! No!

XOCHIMILCO *(holds her tight)*. Don't worry for me. Ten years go fast. When you see the little birds flying, those pretty swallows coming back for spring, always think of me. Because that's where I'll be, with them.

MALINA. I love you, mamita!

XOCHIMILCO. ¡Ayy mi hija! Take care of your brothers. Tell them the truth about their mother so they don't believe the lies. I will be all right if you



promise me you will never be ashamed to be what you are, my daughter.

MALINA. I promise. *(They kiss each other before MALINA is taken away. XOCHIMILCO is left alone. Lights begin to fade out.)*

XOCHIMILCO *(whispering)*. Ay mis hijos.

(Lights slowly fade out as the tree is simultaneously lit and now on the tree appear TONANTZIN at the top, XOCHITL, and LA LLORONA. They call out to XOCHIMILCO who slowly walks toward the tree and climbs on it to join the other WOMEN there. They hold each other's hands and they lie on the tree.)

The End



CONFESSIONS OF WOMEN FROM EAST L.A.

GLOSSARY SPANISH

Aztec & Mayan Names:

XOCHIMILCO [So-ch-mil-co] -
Flowered field, also name of a lake in
Mexico city

TEXCOCO [Te-ch-co-co] - name
of the lake where Tenochtitlán was
founded

TIXOC [Tichoc] - the Mayan word
for love

LA LLORONA - the crying woman

Abre - Open

Adios - Goodbye

Ahh, perro que ladra no muerde -
Ah, a dog that barks doesn't bite

¡Ahora si vas a verlo! - Now you're
really going to get it!

¡Ahorita! - Now!

alli estaban de mensos los idiotas -
there they were those dumb idiots

A mi ni me gustan nadita esos
Americanos - I don't even like those
Anglos

apurate - hurry

¡Aquí estaba! - It was here!

Aqui me quedo - I'll stay here

Asi es que siguele - So go ahead!

¡Asi que se chingen ellos! - So to hell
with them!

Ay - Oh, (any kind of expression)

Ayy, mijita, nombre - Oh, little girl,
don't

Ayy mis hijos - Oh, my children

Ayy que grosera y mal hablada eres
pinche, Lola - Lola, you are so nasty
and crude

¡Ayy que guapo ese pinche viejo! - Oh
that damn man is so handsome!

Ayy si, ni te creo - Yeah right, I don't
even believe you

Buenas noches - Good night

compadre - my buddy (male)

con mi galan - with my leading man

corazón - heart

¡Core, largate! - Run, get out of here!

corre, vete - run, go

Cuidate - Take care of yourself

de traviesa - naughty

diablita - little devil

Diosito - Dear God

el norte - the north

¡Empuja con toda tu fuerza! - Push
with all your strength!



Ese merito - That one	morral - backpack
Ese merito viejo condenado - That damned old man	nalgas - buttocks
esquinclés - children, brats	No cariño - No darling
Esta tierra también es mía - This land also belongs to me	No puedo - I can't
Floresita - Little flower	no se que otra pendejada - I don't know, some other stupidity
fuerza - strength	No seas orgullosa - Don't be proud
Gracias - Thank you	No te apures - Don't worry
grosera - nasty	No, usa piedras - No, he uses rocks
¿Hace mucho frío afuera? - Is it very cold outside?	novela - soap opera
Hasme caso - Listen to me	nuestras vidas - our lives
Hermana(s) - Sister(s)	¿On-de-nació? - Where were you born?
hermanitos - little brothers	Ontonces mi amiga, que dios te bendiga, porque te van a joder. - Then my friend, God bless you, because they're going to screw with you.
Hermano - brother	Ora pues - well then
hiervas - herbs	Padre - Father
hija - daughter	Padre nuestro que estás en los cielos - Heavenly Father who art in heaven (prayer)
hijo - son	pa'nostra gente - for our people
Huelga - Strike	Papi - Daddy
“La Rescatadora” - “The Rescuer”	partera - midwife
Mama - Mother	Pasate, hija - Come in my child
mejor cuéntame de novelas - better tell me about soaps	Pero apurate - But hurry
mestizo - half-Spanish, half-Native American	¿Pero qué estás haciendo? - What are you doing?
mi'jita - my dear daughter	pinche gringo de la migra - a stupid
Mi querido Juan como te extraño - My dear Juan how I miss you	



Anglo immigration officer	tambien - also
Pobrecita - poor little one	Ten - Here
Por el lago - By the lake	Terca como una... - Stubborn like a...
Por favor - Please	¿Tiene papeles? - Does he have papers?
¿Porqué ya no nos hablas? - Why don't you talk to us anymore?	valiente - brave
pos si - well yes	Vas a verlo - You'll see
Pos si, uno de viejo ya que le importa - Well yes, when one gets old it doesn't matter anymore	¡Ven aqui! - Come here!
pues - well	viejo - old man
Pues si - Well yes	Viejos cochinos. Sin verguenza. No tienen madres. Dirty, shameless old men. You don't have mothers.
Que descanses en paz. - May you rest in peace.	viejos rabo verde - dirty old men
que no tengo pegue - that I don't have "it"	Y tu - And you
¿Que paso? - What happened?	Ya acabe - I finished
Que se me hace - I think possibly	Ya es tarde - It's late already
¿Que-quien? - Wa-what, who?	Ya me voi - I'm leaving now
¿Qué te pasa, Xochi? - What's going on with you, Xochi?	ya, ya - now, now
¡Que viva Tenochtitlán! - Long live Tenochtitlán!	Yo creo en Dios todo poderoso, creador de todos los cielos y la tierra, y Jesus Cristo, su unico hijo... - I believe in
¿Quién? - Whom?	God almighty, creator of the heavens and the earth, and Jesus Christ, his only son...
Respira y empuja - Breathe and push	Yo tambien te amo a ti... - I love you, too...
Se 'sta poniendo bien seria la cosa - things are getting juicy	
se volvio loca - She went crazy	
sirenita - little mermaid	
Su unico hijo - her only son	



PAGE ON JOSEFINA'S INVOLVEMENTS & HOW PEOPLE CAN PARTICIPATE



PAGE ON WPR BOOKS



PAGE ON CASA O101'S INVOLVEMENTS &
HOW PEOPLE CAN PARTICIPATE



JOSEFINA LOPEZ

We need your bio

JORGE A. HUERTA, PH.D.

Prof. Huerta is a Chancellor's Associates Professor of Theatre Emeritus at the University of California, San Diego, where he began teaching in the department of Theatre and Dance in 1975. He has directed in regional theatres throughout the United States, including New York City's Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre, Gala Hispanic Theatre in Washington, DC, Seattle's Group Theatre and the San Diego Repertory Theatre. Huerta is also a leading authority on contemporary Chicana/o and US Latina/o theatre who has lectured throughout the US, Latin America and Western Europe. He has published many articles and reviews in journals and anthologies and has edited three collections of plays.

Prof. Huerta published the first book about Chicano theatre, *Chicano Theatre: Themes and Forms* in 1982; his last book, *Chicano Drama: Performance, Society and Myth*, was published by Cambridge University Press in 2000. Dr. Huerta was inducted into the College of Fellows of the American Theatre in 1994 and elected National Association of Chicana and Chicano Studies, (NACCS) Scholar, in 1997. In 2007 Huerta was awarded the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) "Lifetime Achievement in Educational Theatre Award." In 2008 he was recognized as the "Distinguished Scholar" by the American Society for Theatre Research (ASTR), the Society's highest annual honor.